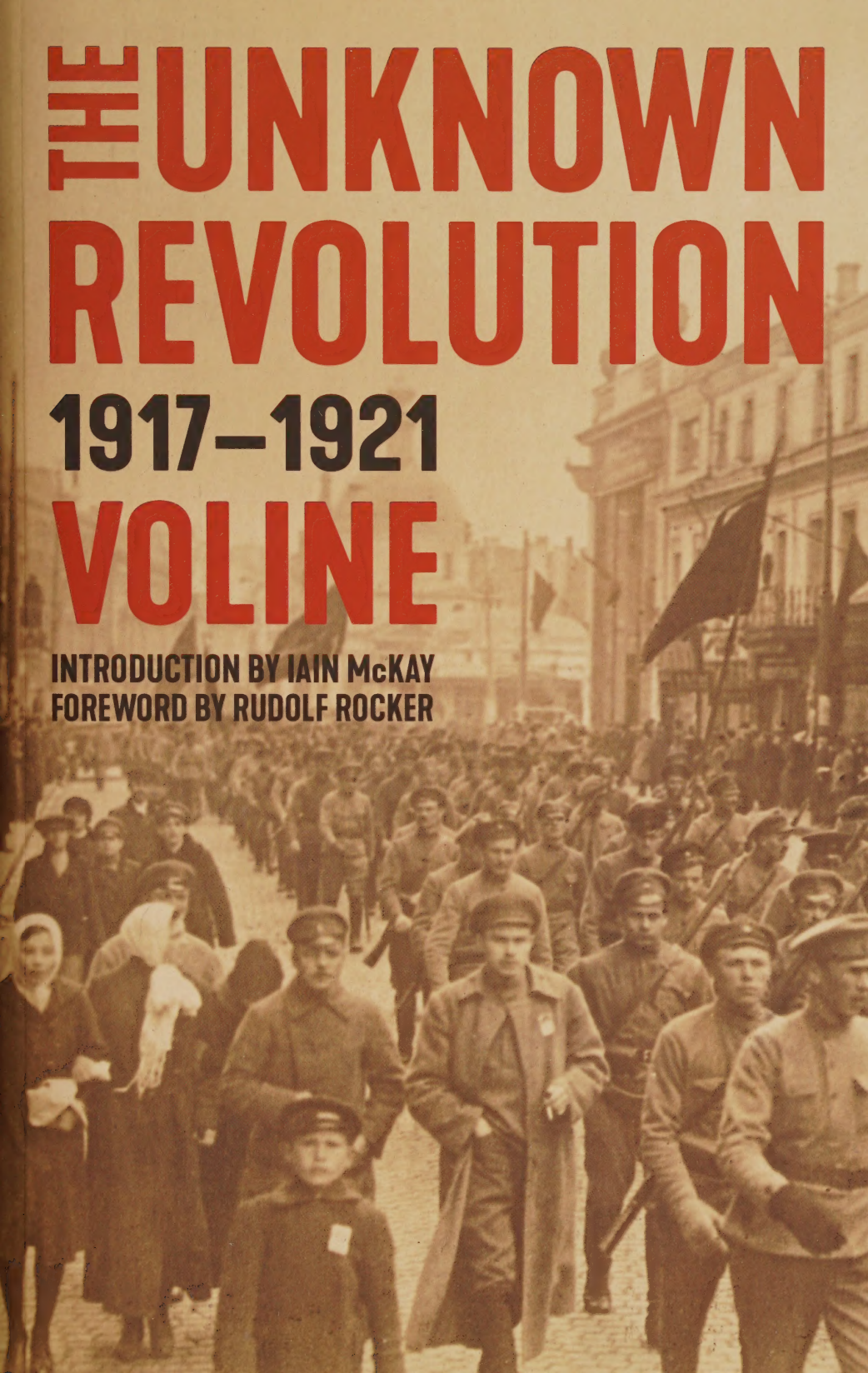
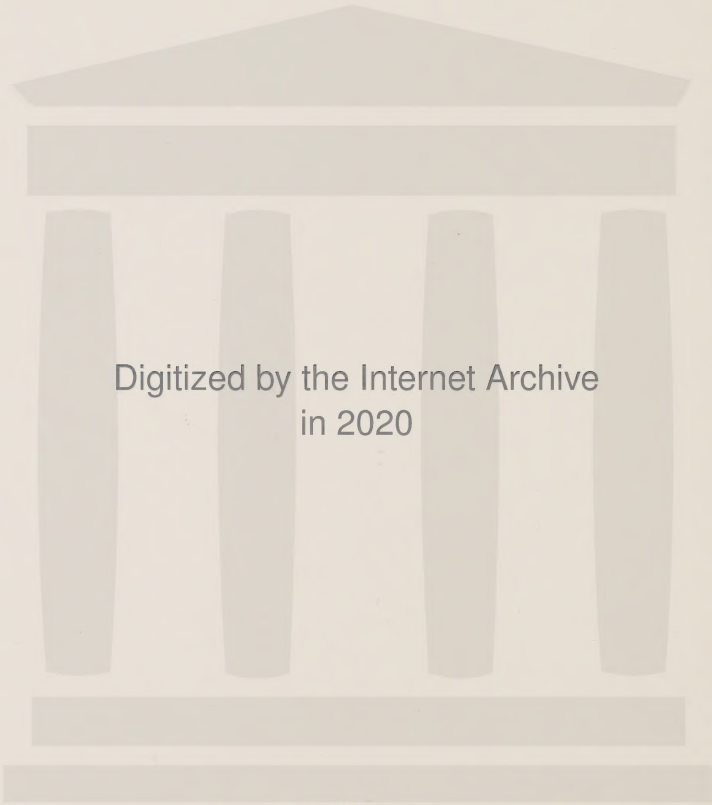
THE UNKNOWN REVOLUTION

1917–1921

VOLINE

INTRODUCTION BY IAIN McKAY
FOREWORD BY RUDOLF ROCKER

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THE UNKNOWN REVOLUTION
1917–1921

Voline

JURA BOOKS

PM

The Unknown Revolution 1917–1921
Voline
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ISBN: 978–1–62963–577–4
Library of Congress Control Number: 2018931536

Cover by John Yates / www.stealworks.com
Interior design by briandesign

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

PM Press
PO Box 23912
Oakland, CA 94623
www.pmpress.org

Printed in the USA by the Employee Owners of Thomson-Shore in Dexter, Michigan.
www.thomsonshore.com

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 2019 EDITION

The State *or* Revolution[1]

> But in the People's State of Marx there will be, we are told, no privileged class at all. All will be equal. . . . At least this is what is promised . . . but there will be a government and, note this well, an extremely complex government. This government will not content itself with administering and governing the masses politically. . . . It will also administer the masses economically, concentrating in the hands of the State the production and division of wealth. . . . There will be a new class, a new hierarchy . . . and the world will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of knowledge, and an immense ignorant majority. And then, woe unto the mass of ignorant ones!
>
> —Michael Bakunin[2]

The Unknown Revolution is a classic anarchist account of the Russian Revolution, and its title gave the libertarian movement a new way of describing history from below.[3] Its author, Voline (1882–1945),

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1 I would like to thank comrades David Berry, Andrew Flood, Michael Harris, and Lucien van der Walt for their comments on previous versions of this introduction.

2 Michael Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1980), 318–19.

3 Sadly, it is necessary to explain what we mean by "libertarian," as this term has been appropriated by the free-market capitalist right. Socialist use of "libertarian" dates from 1857 when it was first used as a synonym for anarchist by communist-anarchist Joseph Déjacque in an Open Letter

was well placed to both describe and analyse these world-shaking events, being a Russian anarchist who took an active part in the revolution once he returned from exile in 1917.[4] Active in radical circles from the earliest years of the twentieth century, he participated in the 1905 near revolution as a member of the populist Social Revolutionary Party, before becoming an anarchist after fleeing the bloody repression of a Tsarist regime fighting for its very existence.[5]

You have in your hands a book written by both an active participant in events (when not, of course, imprisoned by the Bolsheviks) and someone knowledgeable about anarchism.[6] It provides an eyewitness account of the defining period of the twentieth century and seeks to draw appropriate conclusions to help revolutionaries avoid its errors. As Voline puts it in the "Preface":

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to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and in the following year as the title for his paper *Le Libertaire, Journal du Mouvement Social*. This usage became more commonplace in the 1880s, and by the end of the nineteenth century "libertarian" was used as an alternative for anarchist internationally. The American right knowingly stole the term in the 1950s; see my "160 Years of Libertarian," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 71 (Fall 2017).

4 See "Appendix II: A Bibliographical Sketch" for a short history of Voline's book. For a good account of the book and its author, see Paul Avrich, "V.M. Eikhenbaum (Volin): The Man and His Book," in *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

5 See the "Appendix: Russian Revolutionary Parties" for a discussion of the ideas and differences between the populist Social Revolutionary Party and the Russian Marxist factions (namely, the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks).

6 Excellent anarchist eyewitness accounts and analyses of the Russian Revolution include: Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (London/Zagreb: Active Distribution/Što čitaš, 2017); Alexander Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth* (London/Zagreb: Active Distribution/Što čitaš, 2017); Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, *To Remain Silent Is Impossible: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in Russia*, ed. Andrew Zonneveld (Atlanta: On Our Own Authority!, 2013); Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Books, 1970), chapter 52; Emma Goldman et al., *Anarchist Encounters: Russia in Revolution*, ed. A.W. Zurbrugg (London: Anarres Editions, 2017); G.P. Maximoff, *The Guillotine at Work: Twenty Years of Terror in Russia* (Chicago: Alexander Berkman Fund, 1940). An overview of the Russian anarchist movement can be found in Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005).

> A fundamental problem has been bequeathed to us by the revolutions of 1789 and 1917. Opposed to a large extent to oppression, animated by a powerful breath of liberty, and proclaiming liberty as their essential purpose, why did these revolutions go down under a new dictatorship, exercised by a new dominating and privileged group, in a new slavery for the mass of the people involved? What will be the conditions which will permit a revolution to avoid this sad end? Will this end, for a long time still, be a sort of historical inevitability, or is it due to passing factors, or simply to errors and faults that can be avoided from now on? And in the latter case, what will be the means of eliminating the danger which already threatens the revolutions to come? Is it permissible to hope to avert or surmount it?

This is the aim of the work, and to achieve this goal Voline discusses what has been hidden from the usual accounts of the Russian Revolution. As such, *The Unknown Revolution* is an example of history from below, from the perspective of the working classes and our struggle for freedom from class society. However, like any work it can hardly cover every aspect of the revolution nor can it discuss work that appeared after its publication. Here we will attempt to uncover more of the *Unknown Revolution* and seek to show where subsequent research has confirmed Voline's classic. Along the way we will seek to address some of the many distortions and myths inflicted on those seeking to understand the failures of Bolshevism by those seeking to defend it—but who will only, if they are listened to, repeat history rather than learn from it.[7]

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7 It may—and will—be objected that other things were said by Lenin and Trotsky. This is true, just as it is true that the same can be applied to Stalin, as well, but few do so. Rather than being "selective," it is case of seeking the ideas and actions of the Bolsheviks that helped determine the outcome of the revolution. It is far more relevant to look at reality than repeat rhetoric, however fine it may be.

Marxism and Anarchism before 1917

Before discussing the events of 1917 and after, we need to present some theoretical background. Neither Bolsheviks nor anarchists took part in the revolution without having some idea of what to do. Both were long-standing movements that had clashed over how best to fight for socialism and, equally important, what a socialist society would be like in its immediate post-revolution features. For while there was agreement over the end goal—a stateless, communist society—there was much disagreement on how to get there.

While the first person to self-proclaim as an anarchist, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, had critiqued the socialists of his time (namely, "utopian socialists" like Charles Fourier and Jacobin socialists like Louis Blanc), the defining clash between libertarian and authoritarian socialism took place between Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx in the International Working Men's Association. Between approximately 1868 and 1873, these two great thinkers opposed each other both in terms of tactics for the labour movement and for social revolution.[8]

Given how Bakunin's ideas—like anarchism in general—are usually systematically distorted by Marxist accounts, some space is needed to discuss both thinkers. As Lenin draws on the writings of Marx and Engels against anarchism in his *The State and Revolution*, this is no academic task—particularly as the issues and solutions raised are relevant to what happened during the Russian Revolution. In short, ideas matter—particularly the ideas of a ruling party seeking to implement them.

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8 It is necessary to stress that Bakunin did not "invent" revolutionary anarchism. Doubtless he contributed immensely to its development, but Bakunin gained influence by championing tendencies that already existed within the European labour movement at the time. These tendencies, which built upon the rich theoretical contributions of Proudhon by applying them to the labour movement, existed before Bakunin joined the International and would have come into conflict with Marx anyway, but the Russian rebel deepened them and gave them a distinctive social revolutionary stamp.

In contrast to Marx, who sought to organise working-class political parties that would run for election ("political action"), Bakunin advocated what would later be termed a syndicalist strategy.[9] While Marxists "believe it necessary to organise the workers' forces in order to seize the political power of the State," anarchists "organise for the purpose of destroying it" by "the development and organisation of the non-political or anti-political power of the working classes." Bakunin saw this in terms of creating new organs of working-class power in opposition to the state, organised "from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, starting with the associations, then going on to the communes, the region, the nations, and, finally, culminating in a great international and universal federation." In other words, a system of workers' councils or unions creating "a real force" that "knows what to do and is therefore capable of guiding the revolution in the direction marked out by the aspirations of the people: a serious international organisation of workers' associations of all lands capable of replacing this departing world of *states*." To Marx's argument that workers should send their representatives to parliament and municipal councils, Bakunin realised this would mean the "new worker deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, living and soaking up all the bourgeois ideas and acquiring their habits, will cease being workers" and "become converted into bourgeois, even more bourgeois-like than the bourgeois themselves. . . . Because men do not make positions; positions, contrariwise, make men."[10]

Likewise, their views of revolutionary transformation differed. While Marx would use state power to nationalise property, Bakunin argued instead that after a successful revolt "workers' associations would then take possession of all the tools of production as well as

9 The notion that syndicalism by advocating class struggle is influenced by Marxism cannot be sustained once an awareness of Bakunin's actual ideas is gained, as I summarise in "Another View: Syndicalism, Anarchism and Marxism," *Anarchist Studies* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2012).

10 Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchism,* 171–72, 174, 262–63, 270.

all buildings and capital, arming and organising themselves into regional sections made up of groups based on streets and neighbourhood boundaries. The federally organised sections would then associate themselves to form a federated commune." The communes themselves would federate and "organise the common defence and propaganda against the enemies of the Revolution, and develop practical revolutionary solidarity with its friends in all lands."[11] So it must be stressed—particularly given Lenin's argument in *The State and Revolution*—that Bakunin's opposition to Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat" was *not* based on an unawareness that a revolution needed to be organised and defended. Likewise, it is a Marxist myth that anarchists think an anarchist society will be created overnight.[12]

All this is reflected in Voline's book, with its excellent discussion of the anarchist alternatives to Bolshevik state-building and the role of vanguard elements (Book II, Part I, Chapter 1). In this and his analysis of the state, he follows the path laid by Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin—particularly the latter, as he effectively paraphrases Kropotkin's arguments:

> [W]hat means can the State provide to abolish this [capitalist and landlord] monopoly that the working class could not find in its own strength and groups? . . . [W]hat advantages could the State provide for abolishing these same [capitalist and landlord] privileges? Could its governmental machine, developed for the creation and upholding of these privileges, now be used to abolish them? Would not the new function require new organs? And these new organs would they not have to be created by the workers themselves, in *their* unions, *their* federations, completely outside the State?[13]

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11 Ibid., 179–80.

12 These and other Marxist myths about anarchism are debunked in my *An Anarchist FAQ*, vol. 2 (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), section H.2.

13 Peter Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Oakland: AK Press, 2018), 164.

The state and its characteristic features did not arise by chance but rather evolved to secure minority rule. Thus, the bourgeoisie "worked to establish its authority in the place of the authority of the royalty and nobility which it demolished systematically. To this end the bourgeois struggled bitterly, cruelly if need be, in order to establish a powerful, centralised State, which absorbed everything and secured their property . . . along with their full freedom to exploit." The state "cannot take this or that form at will," for it "is necessarily hierarchical, authoritarian—or it ceases to be the State." So "the existence of a power placed above society, but also of a *territorial concentration* and a *concentration of many functions in the life of societies in the hands of a few*" inevitably resulted in a structure that would be "literally inundated by thousands" of issues, which, in turn, take "thousands of functionaries in the capital—most of them corruptible—to read, classify, evaluate all these, to pronounce on the smallest detail," while "the flood [of issues] always rose!" Marxism would "kill all freedom by concentrating production into the hands of functionaries of the State," and so "as long as the statist socialists do not abandon their dream of socialising the instruments of labour in the hands of a centralised State, the inevitable result of their attempts at State Capitalism and the socialist State will be the failure of their dreams and military dictatorship."[14]

Anarchists, in contrast, aim "to find new forms of organisation for the social functions that the State apportioned between its functionaries" based on "independent Communes for the *territorial* groupings, and vast federations of trade unions for groupings *by social functions*," both "interwoven and providing support to each [other] to meet the needs of society," including "mutual protection against aggression, mutual aid, territorial defence." The new world would be created while fighting the old one, for, as with Bakunin, Kropotkin advocated "an economic-revolutionary struggle," namely, the "direct struggle of the workers unions against the capitalism of the bosses" and opposed involvement "in an electoral,

14 Ibid., 191, 211, 226–27, 234, 269.

political, and Parliamentary movement," where the workers' forces "could only wither and be destroyed."[15]

The rise of Marxist social democracy proved the validity of this critique, with the party constantly plagued by "opportunism" and "revisionism"—that is, the arguments of those members who wished the party's rhetoric to match it increasingly reformist practice. This came to a head in 1914 when almost all the social democratic parties supported their states in the imperialist conflict that was the First World War.

This confirmation of Bakunin's warnings is the context for Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, a work much praised by Leninists to this day, which is easy to understand, for like Marx's *The Civil War in France* it is one of the most libertarian works of mainstream Marxism. Yet its account of anarchism is simply a joke, as it completely distorts the *real* differences between libertarian and authoritarian socialism, a distortion that Voline clearly felt the need to rebut—particularly as *The State and Revolution* also presents a far more appealing picture than the grim reality of Lenin's regime.[16]

Let us now compare the reality to the rhetoric.

The Russian Revolution: Rhetoric and Reality

Voline's book is a combination of eyewitness account, political analysis, and discussion of alternatives. He seeks to present a wide overview of the revolution and the roots of its failure in Marxist ideology. However, he concentrates on two main events—the Makhnovist movement and the Kronstadt rebellion. Here we seek to provide details of others to flesh out Voline's account and show its continued relevance.

Given the sweep of the revolution, it is impossible to cover all aspects of it. There is a need to be selective and concentrate on

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15 Ibid., 130, 164, 165, 169.

16 See my "The State and Revolution: Theory and Practice," in *Bloodstained: One Hundred Years of Leninist Counterrevolution*, ed. Friends of Aron Baron (Oakland: AK Press, 2017).

key issues. For Voline, it was clear that combating the notion that Leninism produced a "successful" revolution was the focus, along with showing that there was an alternative. Indeed, most of Book II contrasts anarchism to Marxism in order to help revolutionaries today avoid the mistakes made in Russia.[17] This is still a pressing need, for the fact that the Bolsheviks seized power and remained there seems of the utmost importance to many so-called revolutionaries now as then and provides the basis for claims that it was a successful revolution and an example that should be followed.

Needless to say, we focus primarily on the events after October when the rhetoric of the party met reality. Events and ideas that predate the October Revolution are discussed when they help to clarify subsequent developments—for, as Voline suggests, Marxist prejudices and dogmas played their role in how the revolution degenerated. Unsurprisingly, Marxist accounts are usually good on the summer of 1917 but less so on both the February Revolution and popular movements post-October. This is understandable, given that the former saw the Bolsheviks *oppose* the street protests and strikes that led to the abdication of the Tsar, while the latter were *against* the so-called "workers' state." It is between these events, when the unknown revolution started, that today's Leninists are happiest in recounting history from below. They are less keen to explore how the Bolshevik state undermined that unknown revolution, and most accounts of the revolution are little more than hagiology praising the party leadership and its willingness to make the "hard" decisions required to "save" the revolution.

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17 There are, of course, more libertarian forms of Marxism—such as council communism—but mainstream Marxism (whether reformist or revolutionary) has always been statist and centralised. It must also be noted that at the time most of this mainstream opposed Bolshevism in the name of (representative) democracy, such as Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), written in 1918, and Julius Martov, *The State and Socialist Revolution* (London: Carl Slienger, 1977), written 1919–1923.

For, as Voline stressed, Stalin did not "fall from the moon," and the roots of the Stalinist nightmare can be traced back to the dreams of Lenin in 1917, and even further, including the works of Marx and Engels.[18] After all, long before the revolution, Lenin had argued that within the party it was a case of "the transformation of the power of ideas into the power of authority, the subordination of lower Party bodies to higher ones." "Bureaucracy *versus* democracy," Lenin stressed, "is in fact centralism *versus* autonomism; it is the organisational principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy as opposed to the organisational principle of opportunist Social-Democracy. The latter strives to proceed from the bottom upward, and, therefore, wherever possible . . . upholds autonomism and 'democracy,' carried (by the overzealous) to the point of anarchism. The former strives to proceed from the top downward."[19] Such visions of centralised organisation were the model for the revolutionary state, and once in power the Bolsheviks did not disappoint: "for the leadership, the principle of maximum centralisation of authority served more than expedience. It consistently resurfaced as the image of a peacetime political system as well."[20] Sadly, they singularly failed to comprehend how this perspective when applied in practice simply produced an ever-growing alienation of the masses from "their" party and state, along with an ever-expanding bureaucracy.

As would be expected from someone who was imprisoned and nearly shot by the regime, saw his comrades murdered, and experienced the hopes of the revolution being crushed by party dictatorship, Voline is harsh on Lenin, Trotsky, and Marxism in general. There is a tendency in the book to focus on the role of Bolshevik

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18 See my *An Anarchist FAQ*, vol. 2, section H for an exploration of this immense subject.

19 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), 367, 396–97.

20 Thomas F. Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia: Ideology and Industrial Organisation 1917–1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 91.

ideology, almost to the point of ignoring other factors. This led Maurice Brinton to suggest his account was "an over-simplified analysis of the fate of the revolution."[21] Yet this in itself seems simplistic, given the negative impact of Bolshevik ideology in, say, the economic crisis and, as Brinton himself proved, the elimination of workers' economic power.

Given this, even with exaggerations, Voline's focus on Marxist ideology is important. As Marxist accounts of the rise of Stalinism—starting with Trotsky—focus purely on what they call "objective circumstances" (civil war, economic crisis, isolation, etc.), Voline's account was a necessary corrective. Yet both factors need to be considered and the interaction of reality and ideology understood. Once that is done it becomes clear that Voline is closer to the truth, even with his at times overwrought rhetoric—it is as if the Bolsheviks were providing a case study in how *not* to conduct a revolution.

Lenin's *State and Revolution*

Before discussing the reality of the new regime, we should sketch the rhetoric. For it is the rhetoric of 1917 that is still used by Leninists today to convince people to join their parties and seek to repeat the Bolshevik seizure of power. This is understandable, for if you consider the degeneration of the revolution into Stalinism as being the product purely of "objective circumstances"—such as civil war, economic crisis, isolation through the failure of revolutions in the West, the economic backwardness of Russia, declassing of the proletariat, among others[22]—and unrelated to Bolshevik ideology, then

21 "The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control: The State and Counter-Revolution," in *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton*, ed. David Goodway (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 296.

22 This is in spite of Lenin arguing that every revolution was an "incredibly complicated and painful process" that involved civil war; V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 26 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 118–19. It "will never be possible to build socialism at a time when everything is running smoothly and tranquilly," instead it would "be everywhere built at a time of disruption," not least because civil war was inherently "devastating";

there are *no lessons to be learnt from it*—other than the hope the revolution takes place in a more advanced country, is not isolated, is not subject to a lengthy civil war nor foreign intervention.

So what were the promises of 1917?

Lenin uses Marx's writings on the Paris Commune to argue for a new kind of state. He quotes Marx on how "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes," that the commune's council "was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time," with "the suppression of the standing army, and its replacement by the armed people." The Commune, Lenin summarised, "replaced the smashed state machine 'only' by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall;" and "was ceasing to be a state since it had to suppress, not the majority of the population, but a minority (the exploiters). It had smashed the bourgeois state machine. In place of a special coercive force the population itself came on the scene. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense of the word." For the state is "a power which arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it" and "consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc., at their command." The public power "'does not directly coincide' with the armed population, with its 'self-acting armed organisation.'"[23]

V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 27 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 264, 517, 520. So, according to its defenders, Bolshevism failed in the face of "objective circumstances" they also consider inevitable.

23 V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution," in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 316, 336–37, 339, 357. It must be noted that some Marxists argue—rightly, in my opinion (see *An Anarchist FAQ*, vol. 2, section H.3.10)—that Lenin distorted Marx's position on seizing political power by ignoring the many comments by him and Engels on capturing the existing state and using it to introduce socialism after smashing its bureaucracy, as discussed by Binay Sarker and Adam Buick, *Marxism-Leninism—Poles Apart* (Memari, IN: Avenel Press, 2012).

This new regime would be "an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people" that "imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force." Yet, the "more democratic the 'state' which consists of the armed workers, and which is 'no longer a state in the proper sense of the word,' the more rapidly *every form* of state begins to wither away." A republic of soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies would be the form of this new state, "a centralised organisation of force" that would "oppose conscious, democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism."[24]

While the political structures created by capitalism would be smashed, the economic ones had to be used as the "economic foundation" for socialism. Indeed, "the *postal service* [is] an example of the socialist economic system." It is currently "a business organised on the lines of state-*capitalist* monopoly. . . . But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists . . . we shall have a splendidly-equipped mechanism, freed from the 'parasite,' a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves." This "is a concrete, practical task which can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfilment will rid the working people of exploitation." The Bolshevik's "immediate aim" was to "organise the whole economy on the lines of the postal service" and "on the basis of what capitalism has already created" with "the establishment of workers' control over the capitalists . . . exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of armed workers."[25] And so:

> *All* citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state. . . . *All* citizens become employees and workers of

24 Lenin, "The State and Revolution," 328, 348, 373, 383.
25 Ibid., 345–46, 380.

> a *single* countrywide state "syndicate." All that is required is that they should work equally, do their proper share of work, and get equal pay; the accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to the utmost and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations . . . of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts. . . . The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labour and pay.[26]

So socialism would be an extension of democracy but also highly centralised. It would turn everyone into employees (wage workers) of the state based on the economic institutions of capitalism. The problems with this are clear from an anarchist perspective, which is a class analysis based on the historic and current role of state. Lenin, like Marxists in general, viewed centralism, a key characteristic of the state, as neutral, as easily utilised by the working class as by minority classes like the bourgeoisie. Anarchists, in contrast, recognised that a centralised, top-down social organisation did not evolve by accident but was structured that way to secure minority rule and so could not be used to achieve socialism, for recreating that structure would also recreate a minority class around it. New functions needed new organs.

The anarchist analysis was confirmed after October, as we will now show.

The Soviets

Voline's account of the centralising nature of Bolshevism (Book II, Part III, Chapter 1) is very much to the point. Given that Lenin had consistently stressed the need for the *Bolsheviks* to seize power and the centralised nature of that new power, the anarchists' 1917 warning that the soviets would be marginalised proved prescient.

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26 Ibid., 383.

Yet Voline gives no account of "soviet power" and its onslaught on the soviets. We will correct this omission now.[27]

The Bolshevik's marginalisation of the soviets started immediately after the October Revolution in 1917, when they created a government superior to the soviets in the shape of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) above the Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) elected by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Given that Lenin had argued for the fusing of executive and legislative powers in the hands of the soviets, his promises did not last the night. Four days later the Sovnarkom unilaterally gave itself legislative power, making clear the party's pre-eminence over the soviets.[28]

So the highest organ of soviet power was turned into little more than a rubber stamp for a Bolshevik executive, aided by the activities of its Bolshevik-dominated presidium that was converted "into the de facto centre of power within VTsIK." It "began to award representations to groups and factions which supported the government. With the VTsIK becoming ever larger and more unwieldy by the day, the presidium began to expand its activities" and was used "to circumvent general meetings." The Bolsheviks were able "to increase the power of the presidium, postpone regular sessions, and present VTsIK with policies which had already been implemented by the Sovnarkom. Even in the presidium itself very few people determined policy."[29] This reflected a similar process elsewhere, as "[e]ffective power in the local soviets relentlessly gravitated to the executive committees, and especially their presidia. Plenary sessions became increasingly symbolic and ineffectual."[30]

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27 See "Appendix IV: The Structure of the Soviet State" for a short account of the Bolshevik regime's various bodies.

28 Neil Harding, *Leninism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 253.

29 Charles Duval, "Yakov M. Sverdlov and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets (VTsIK)," *Soviet Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 1979): 7–8, 18.

30 Carmen Sirianni, *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy: The Soviet Experience* (London: Verso/NLB, 1982), 204. Also see Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power: A Study of Moscow during the Civil War, 1918–21*

As Bolsheviks lost influence post-October, workers started to vote for non-Bolshevik parties and "in many places the Bolsheviks felt constrained to dissolve Soviets or prevent re-elections where Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries had gained majorities."[31] Indeed, for all the provincial soviet elections in the spring and summer of 1918 for which data is available, there was an "impressive success of the Menshevik-SR block," followed by "the Bolshevik practice of disbanding soviets that came under Menshevik-SR control." The "subsequent wave of anti-Bolshevik uprisings" were repressed by force.[32] The Mensheviks and Right SRs were both banned, even though the former's official policy was for peaceful change by winning soviet elections and to expel any member who took part in armed conflict against the Bolsheviks.[33]

As well as forcibly disbanding elected soviets with non-Bolshevik majorities, the Bolsheviks also took to packing soviets to ensure their majority. For example, in Petrograd the Bolsheviks faced "demands from below for the immediate re-election" of the soviet, but before the election in June 1918 the existing Bolshevik-controlled soviet confirmed new regulations "to help offset possible weaknesses" in their "electoral strength in factories." The "most significant change in the makeup of the new soviet was

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(Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1987), 166; Donald J. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 83, 100.

31 Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 179. Also see Duval, "Yakov M. Sverdlov," 13–14; Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism 1918–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 366–67; Leonard Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State: The First Phase, 1917–1922* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 191; S.A. Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 201.

32 Vladimir N. Brovkin, *The Mensheviks after October: Socialist Opposition and the Rise of the Bolshevik Dictatorship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 159.

33 Getzler, *Martov*, 182–83; Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*, 193, 355.

that numerically decisive representation was given to agencies in which the Bolsheviks had overwhelming strength, among them the Petrograd Trade Union Council, individual trade unions, factory committees in closed enterprises, district soviets, and district non-party workers' conferences." This ensured that "[o]nly 260 of roughly 700 deputies in the new soviet were to be elected in factories, which guaranteed a large Bolshevik majority in advance." Clearly, the Bolsheviks had "contrived a majority" in the new Soviet long before gaining 127 of the 260 factory delegates. Then there is "the nagging question of how many Bolshevik deputies from factories were elected instead of the opposition because of press restrictions, voter intimidation, vote fraud, or the short duration of the campaign." The SR and Menshevik press, for example, were reopened "only a couple of days before the start of voting." Moreover, "Factory Committees from closed factories could and did elect soviet deputies (the so-called dead souls), one deputy for each factory with more than one thousand workers at the time of shutdown," while the electoral assemblies for unemployed workers "were organised through Bolshevik-dominated trade union election commissions." Overall, then, the Bolshevik election victory "was highly suspect, even on the shop floor."[34]

This was also the case at the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets held in early July 1918, where "electoral fraud gave the Bolsheviks a huge majority of congress delegates." In reality, "the number of legitimately elected Left-SR delegates was roughly equal to that of the Bolsheviks." The Left SR expected a majority but did not count on the "roughly 399 Bolsheviks delegates whose right to be seated was challenged by the Left SR minority in the congress's credentials commission." Without these dubious delegates, the Left SRs and SR Maximalists would have outnumbered the Bolsheviks by around thirty delegates. This ensured "the Bolshevik's successful

34 Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 248–52. Also see Brovkin, *The Mensheviks after October*, 240.

fabrication of a large majority in the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets."[35] This gerrymandering deprived the Left SRs of their democratic majority, and as a result they assassinated the German ambassador in the hope of provoking a "revolutionary war" with Germany. This, in turn, allowed the Bolsheviks to outlaw them for organising an "uprising" against "soviet power."

By July 1918, the Bolshevik regime was a de facto party dictatorship—a fact soon reflected in party ideology.[36] Anarchist-turned-Bolshevik Victor Serge recounted that when he arrived in Petrograd in January 1919 he read an article by Zinoviev, a leading Bolshevik, on the monopoly of power by the Bolshevik Party.[37] He then joined the party and spent some time seeking to convince anarchists of this necessity for party dictatorship.[38] At the Second Congress of the Communist International held in 1920—when "the counter-revolution was defeated"[39]—Zinoviev introduced the discussion of the role of the party with these words:

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35 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power,* 288, 308, 396, 442. Also see Geoffrey Swain, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War* (London: Longman, 1996), 176. It must be stressed that this gerrymandering ignores the over-representation of workers as compared to peasants, with the former having five times as many representatives as the latter. As such, the Left SRs had much more popular support across the country than these figures suggest due to their influence within the peasantry. In contrast, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had little rural support or influence.

36 Opposition parties were sometimes tolerated—usually when the White threat was highest, as they could be counted on to help the regime. However, when the White threat decreased and workers' protest against the regime returned, these parties were again suppressed. The final suppression, along with the banning of factions within the party, occurred *after* the end of the civil war.

37 Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (New York: New York Review Books, 2012), 81.

38 See my "The Worst of the Anarchists," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 61 (Winter 2014).

39 In the words of attendee anarchist-turned-Bolshevik Alfred Rosmer, *Lenin's Moscow* (London: Bookmarks, 1971), 101. He also adds that Wrangel "could be ignored," which in part explains the Bolsheviks turning on the Makhnovists in 1920, ironically ensuring Wrangel a space to renew the civil war.

> Today, people like Kautsky come along and say that in Russia you do not have the dictatorship of the working class but the dictatorship of the party. They think this is a reproach against us. Not in the least! We have a dictatorship of the working class and that is precisely why we also have a dictatorship of the Communist Party. The dictatorship of the Communist Party is only a function, an attribute, an expression of the dictatorship of the working class . . . the dictatorship of the proletariat is at the same time the dictatorship of the Communist Party.[40]

Lenin made similar comments in the work *Left-Wing Communism*, written for that Congress,[41] while Trotsky, as we will see, made identical comments and arguments.

Trotsky was rewriting history when he claimed in the mid-1930s that "[i]n the beginning, the party had wished and hoped to preserve freedom of political struggle within the framework of the Soviets" but that the civil war "introduced stern amendments into this calculation," for rather than being "regarded not as a principle, but as an episodic act of self-defence," the opposite is the case—party dictatorship *was* held up as a principle. So while Trotsky was right to state that "on all sides the masses were pushed away gradually from actual participation in the leadership of the country," he was utterly wrong to imply that this process happened *after* the end of the civil war rather than before its start and that the Bolsheviks did not ideologically justify it.[42]

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40 *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920*, vol. 1 (New York: Pathfinder, 1991), 151–52. Also see a similar extract from a Zinoviev article quoted in Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils 1905–1921* (New York: Random House, 1974), 239–40.

41 Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 567–68, 571–73.

42 Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* (London: Faber, 1937), 90, 96.

Finally, we must note the attitude of the Bolsheviks to the soviets in 1905, as this throws light on post-October developments. As Trotsky recounted, the St. Petersburg Bolsheviks were "frightened at first by such an innovation as a non-partisan representation of the embattled masses, and could find nothing better to do than to present the Soviet with an ultimatum: immediately adopt a Social-Democratic program or disband."[43] The Bolsheviks were convinced that "only a strong party along class lines can guide the proletarian political movement and preserve the integrity of its program, rather than a political mixture of this kind, an indeterminate and vacillating political organisation such as the workers council represents and cannot help but represent."[44] In other words, the soviets could not reflect workers' interests because they were elected by the workers![45]

In 1905, the St. Petersburg soviet ignored the vanguard, with the implications of this perspective becoming clear in 1918. Yet Bolshevik activities in 1905 and 1918 did not spring from nowhere, for both have obvious roots in Lenin's argument in *What is to be Done?* (written in 1902) that "*there could not have been* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers," as it must "be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness." The "theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated

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43 Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, vol. 1 (London: Panther History, 1969), 106.

44 quoted in Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 77.

45 In contrast, anarchists viewed the soviets as embryos of the new social order; see Peter Kropotkin, "L'Action directe et la Grève générale en Russie," *Les Temps Nouveaux* 2 (December 1905). Likewise, unlike the Bolsheviks who came to this conclusion in 1917, anarchists argued the revolution had to move beyond mere political change into a social revolution; see Peter Kropotkin, "The Revolution in Russia," "The Russian Revolution and Anarchism," and "Enough of Illusions," in *Direct Struggle against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Iain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014).

by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals." This meant "there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the *only* choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course" and so "to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology."[46]

This places the party in a privileged position as regards the class and, worse, turns class consciousness into a question of the degree to which the workers concur with the party. As Voline indicated, this cannot but help prejudice the party against autonomous working-class self-activity and instil an authoritarian perspective that, once in power, had totalitarian results. Unsurprisingly, while the party is mentioned only in passing (and even then ambiguously) in Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, in other writings during 1917 he was very clear that his party "can and *must* take state power into their own hands" and the "Bolsheviks must assume power."[47] The soviets were simply seen as the best means to that end.

Significantly, in 1907, Lenin had argued that "Social-Democratic Party organisations [i.e., the Bolsheviks] may, in case of necessity, participate in inter-party Soviets" ("on strict Party lines") and "utilise" such organs "for the purpose of developing the Social-Democratic movement." He then noted that the party "must bear in mind that if Social-Democratic activities among the proletarian masses are properly, effectively and widely organised, such institutions may actually become superfluous."[48] As, indeed, they did post-October, even if they formally continued to exist.

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46 Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 24, 28–29.

47 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 26, 19.

48 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 12 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1962), 143–44.

The Factory Committees

As well as undermining political democracy, the new regime also systematically destroyed economic democracy. During 1917, workers started to form factory committees and these tended to move from supervising the bosses to increasingly managing the workplace (a move often driven by necessity as bosses fled the country). Strangely, given the role anarchists played in this movement (exercising an influence much greater than their numbers would suggest), Voline mentions the issue of workers' control only in passing. He rightly contrasts the Bolshevik position in 1917 of workers' supervision to the anarchist one of workers' self-management (Book II, Part II, Chapter 3) but does not go into details.[49]

It must be stressed that unlike anarchists who had argued for workers self-management of production since Proudhon's *What is Property?*, written in 1840,[50] the Bolshevik Party "had no position on the question of workers' control prior to 1917." The factory committees "launched the slogan of workers' control of production quite independently of the Bolshevik party. It was not until May that the party began to take it up." However, Lenin used "the term [workers' control] in a very different sense from that of the factory committees," and his proposals were "thoroughly statist and centralist in character, whereas the practice of the factory committees was essentially local and autonomous." While those Bolsheviks "connected with the factory committees assigned responsibility for workers' control of production chiefly to the committees" this "never became official Bolshevik party policy." In fact, "the Bolsheviks never deviated before or after October from a commitment to a statist, centralised solution to economic disorder. The

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49 "In English [workers' control] conveys a much stronger sense of labour direction and management than it does in Russian. (Its literal meaning is much closer to 'supervision' than 'command')"; William Rosenberg, "Workers and Workers' Control in the Russian Revolution," *History Workshop: A Journal of Socialist Historians* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 89.

50 *Property Is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology,* ed. Iain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), 119.

disagreement between" the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks "was not about state control in the abstract, but what *kind* of state should co-ordinate control of the economy: a bourgeois state or a workers' state?" They "did not disagree radically in the specific measures which they advocated for control of the economy." Lenin "never developed a conception of workers' self-management. Even after October, workers' control remained for him fundamentally a matter of 'inspection' and 'accounting' . . . rather than as being necessary to the transformation of the process of production by the direct producers. For Lenin, the transformation of capitalist relations of production was achieved at central state level, rather than at enterprise level. Progress to socialism was guaranteed by the character of the state and achieved through policies by the central state—not by the degree of power exercised by workers on the shop floor."[51]

Unsurprisingly, once in power the Bolsheviks sought to implement their traditional perspectives on "socialism." During the first months of Soviet power the factory committee leaders "sought to bring their model into being," but "the party leadership overruled them. The result was to vest both managerial *and* control powers in organs of the state which were subordinate to the central authorities, and formed by them."[52] This does not mean that lip service was not paid to the aspirations belatedly championed in the summer of 1917, as Lenin issued a "Draft Decree on Workers' Control" in November of that year, but as Maurice Brinton notes:

> These excellent, and often quoted, provisions in fact only listed and legalised what had already been achieved and implemented in many places by the working class in the course of the struggles of the previous months. They were to be followed by three further provisions, of ominous import. It is amazing that these are not better known. In practice they were soon to nullify the positive features of the previous

51 S.A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories 1917–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 153, 154, 159, 228.

52 Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 38.

provisions. They stipulated (point 5) that "the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees were legally binding upon the owners of enterprises" but that they could be "*annulled by trade unions and congresses*" (our emphasis). This was exactly the fate that was to befall the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees: the trade unions proved to be the main medium through which the Bolsheviks sought to break the autonomous power of the Factory Committees.

The Draft Decree also stressed (point 6) that "in all enterprises of state importance" all delegates elected to exercise workers' control were to be "answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property." Enterprises "of importance to the State" were defined (point 7)—and this has a familiar tone for all revolutionaries—as "*all enterprises working for defence purposes, or in any way connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population*" (our emphasis). In other words practically any enterprise could be declared by the new Russian State as "of importance to the State." The delegates from such an enterprise (elected to exercise workers' control) were now made answerable to a higher authority. Moreover if the trade unions (already fairly bureaucratised) could "annul" the decisions of rank-and-file delegates, what real power in production had the rank and file? The Decree on Workers' Control was soon proved, in practice, not to be worth the paper it was written on.[53]

The following month saw the Bolsheviks, as Lenin had promised, start to build from the top down their system of unified administration based on the Tsarist system of central bodies that governed and regulated certain industries during the war. The Supreme Economic Council (*Vesenka*) was set up and "was widely

53 Brinton, *For Workers' Power*, 318.

acknowledged by the Bolsheviks as a move towards 'statisation' (*ogosudarstvleniye*) of economic authority." Vesenka began "to build, from the top, its 'unified administration' of particular industries. The pattern is informative," as it "gradually took over" the Tsarist state agencies such as the *Glakvi* "and converted them . . . into administrative organs subject to [its] direction and control." The Bolsheviks, Brinton summarises, "clearly opted" for the taking over of "the institutions of bourgeois economic power and use[d] them to their own ends." This system "necessarily implies the perpetuation of hierarchical relations within production itself, and therefore the perpetuation of class society."[54] It was a similar process within the workplace, with Lenin, in April 1918, demanding "[o]bedience, and unquestioning obedience at that, during work to the one-man decisions of Soviet directors, of the dictators elected or appointed by Soviet institutions, vested with dictatorial powers."[55] In short, *capitalist* social relations were imposed within a state capitalist bureaucracy.[56]

While Brinton's work is still the best account of Bolshevik attitudes on workers' control, its (negative) impact on the revolution, and alternatives to that perspective, he downplays the fact that those most active in the factory committees were usually Bolsheviks. As one Russian anarchist suggested, while "the Russian proletariat

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54 Ibid., 323, 324, 335.

55 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 27, 316.

56 It should be noted that one-man management was first applied on the railways and the "result of replacing workers' committees with one-man rule . . . was not directiveness, but distance, and increasing inability to make decisions appropriate to local conditions. Despite coercion, orders on the railroads were often ignored as unworkable." It got so bad that "a number of local Bolshevik officials . . . began in the fall of 1918 to call for the restoration of workers' control, not for ideological reasons, but because workers themselves knew best how to run the line efficiently, and might obey their own central committee's directives if they were not being constantly countermanded"; William G. Rosenberg, "Workers' Control on the Railroads and Some Suggestions Concerning Social Aspects of Labour Politics in the Russian Revolution," *Journal of Modern History* 49, no. 2 (June 1977): D1208–9.

was, as a whole, entirely ignorant of the ideas of Revolutionary Syndicalism," the "labour movement of Russia went along the road of decentralisation. It chose spontaneously the course of a unique Revolutionary Syndicalism," so even though "dominated by the Bolsheviks, the Factory Committees of that period were carrying out the Anarchist idea. The latter, of course, suffered in clarity and purity when carried out by the Bolsheviks within the Factory Committees; had the Anarchists been in the majority, they would have endeavoured to displace from the work of the committees the element of centralisation and state principles." Ultimately, the "Bolsheviks subordinated the Factory Committees, which were federalistic and anarchistic by their nature, to the centralised trade unions" and "proceeded to strip the Factory Committees of all their functions" bar "the policing role imposed upon them by the Bolsheviks."[57] Given that the factory committees were headed by people who shared the same prejudices as regards centralisation and statist socialism as Lenin, this meant they did not have the theoretical power to challenge—or even successfully question—the mainstream Bolshevik position and the dangers it held for genuine socialism.

That the Bolshevik onslaught on economic democracy was driven in large part by its vision of socialism can be seen from early 1920. Discussing how the civil war had ended, Lenin argued that the "whole attention of the Communist Party and the Soviet government is centred on peaceful economic development, on problems of the dictatorship and of one-man management. . . . When we tackled them for the first time in 1918, there was no civil war and no experience to speak of." So it was "not only experience . . . but something more profound" that has "induced us now, as it did two years ago, to concentrate all our attention on labour discipline."[58]

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57 Maximoff, *The Guillotine at Work,* 351, 364, 366–67.

58 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 30 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 503–4.

Social relationships *within* production were considered unimportant for the real issue was nationalisation:

> The domination of the proletariat consists in the fact that the landowners and capitalists have been deprived of their property. . . . The victorious proletariat has abolished property, has completely annulled it—and therein lies its domination as a class. The prime thing is the question of property. As soon as the question of property was settled practically, the domination of the class was assured.[59]

This perspective could not help but place economic power into the hands of state officials and replace private capitalism with state capitalism.

So as the soviets were marginalised, gerrymandered, and packed, a parallel movement was occurring in the workplace. Yet this—unlike the undermining of the soviets—was in line with the vision of socialism Lenin explicitly expounded in 1917. Bolshevik "socialism" was built on the institutions created under capitalism and could do nothing but help worsen the economic crisis and add to the emerging bureaucracy of the new state, as we will now sketch.

The State Machine

Lenin had promised a semi-state in which the bureaucracy would be small and quickly become smaller. Yet the bureaucracy "grew by leaps and bounds. Control over the new bureaucracy constantly diminished, partly because no genuine opposition existed. The alienation between 'people' and 'officials,' which the soviet system was supposed to remove, was back again. Beginning in 1918, complaints about 'bureaucratic excesses,' lack of contact with voters, and new proletarian bureaucrats grew louder and louder."[60] Within working-class circles there was "the widespread view that trade unions, factory committees, and soviets" were "no longer repre-

59 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 30, 456.
60 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 242.

sentative, democratically run working-class institutions; instead they had been transformed into arbitrary, bureaucratic government agencies. There was ample reason for this concern." Hence the "growing disenchantment of Petrograd workers with economic conditions and the evolving structure and operation of Soviet political institutions."[61]

The growth in state bureaucracy started immediately with the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, particularly as the state's functions grew to include economic decisions as well as political ones:

> The old state's political apparatus was "smashed," but in its place a new bureaucratic and centralised system emerged with extraordinary rapidity. After the transfer of government to Moscow in March 1918 it continued to expand. . . . As the functions of the state expanded so did the bureaucracy, and by August 1918 nearly a third of Moscow's working population were employed in offices. The great increase in the number of employees . . . took place in early to mid-1918 and, thereafter, despite many campaigns to reduce their number, they remained a steady proportion of the falling population.[62]

The apparatus of the Vesenka, for example, grew from 6,000 in September 1918 to 26,000 by January 1921—including local economic councils, there were 234,000 functionaries.[63] By the end of 1920 there were 5,800,000 officials of all kinds, five times the number of industrial workers.[64]

Given that the Bolshevik vision of socialism was inherently centralised and statist, it was inevitable that a "bureaucratic machine is created that is appalling in its parasitism, inefficacy, and

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61 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 224, 231.

62 Richard Sakwa, "The Commune State in Moscow in 1918," *Slavic Review* 46, no. 3–4 (Autumn–Winter, 1987): 437–38.

63 Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 154.

64 Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution 1917–1923* (London: Bookmarks, 1990), 191.

corruption."[65] The *glavki* system "did not know the true number of enterprises in their branch" of industry and was "unable to cope with th[e] enormous tasks" given to it. The "shortcomings of the central administrations and *glavki* increased together with the number of enterprises under their control."[66] Worse:

> The most evident shortcoming . . . was that it did not ensure central allocation of resources and central distribution of output, in accordance with any priority ranking . . . materials were provided to factories in arbitrary proportions: in some places they accumulated, whereas in others there was a shortage. Moreover, the length of the procedure needed to release the products increased scarcity at given moments, since products remained stored until the centre issued a purchase order on behalf of a centrally defined customer. Unused stock coexisted with acute scarcity. The centre was unable to determine the correct proportions among necessary materials and eventually to enforce implementation of the orders for their total quantity. The gap between theory and practice was significant.[67]

The "centre's information was sketchy at best" and it "was deluged with work of an ad hoc character." "Demands for fuel and supplies piled up," while "orders from central organs disrupted local production plans," for the centre "drew up plans for developing or reorganising the economy of a region, either in ignorance, or against the will, of the local authorities."[68] All of which confirms anarchist accounts:

> In Kharkoff I saw the demonstration of the inefficiency of the centralised bureaucratic machine. In a large factory

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65 Alexander Berkman, "The Russian Tragedy," in *To Remain Silent Is Impossible*, 96.

66 Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism*, 232–33, 250.

67 Ibid., 233.

68 Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 58–59, 61–62, 68–69.

> warehouse there lay huge stacks of agricultural machinery. Moscow had ordered them made "within two weeks, in pain of punishment for sabotage." They were made, and six months already had passed without the "central authorities" making any effort to distribute the machines to the peasantry. . . . It was one of the countless examples of the manner in which the Moscow system "worked," or, rather, did not work.[69]

Voline's account of his visit to an oil refinery (Book II, Part III, Chapter 5) and Bolshevik opposition to attempts in Kronstadt to socialise housing (Book III, Part I, Chapter 4) shows in microcosm the overall Bolshevik perspective and how it hindered the local initiative needed to solve the problems the revolution faced. Sadly, "the failure of *glavkism* did not bring about a reconsideration of the problems of economic organisation. . . . On the contrary, the ideology of centralisation was reinforced."[70]

More: given that Bolshevik ideology—inspired by orthodox Marxism and its call "to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State"[71]—undermined the factory committees, Lenin simply handed the economy and so economic power to the emerging bureaucracy, just as he handed society and so social power to that same body.[72]

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69 Emma Goldman, "The Crushing of the Russian Revolution," in *To Remain Silent Is Impossible*, 40. Goldman also recounted how food was "lying at side stations and rotting away"; *My Disillusionment in Russia*, 109. Malle confirms the "inefficiency of central [food] distribution" and how it "entailed waste"; *The Economic Organisation of War Communism*, 424–25.

70 Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism*, 275.

71 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 490.

72 We should also note that, as a centralised body, the Bolshevik Party itself also had its own bureaucracy, a bureaucracy Lenin had to fight throughout 1917. As Trotsky summarised, the "habits peculiar to a political machine were already forming in the underground. The young revolutionary bureaucrat was already emerging as a type," and in 1917 "a sharp cleavage

So "in the soviets and in economic management the embryo of centralised and bureaucratic state forms had already emerged by mid-1918."[73] The new state machine was not limited to the political and economic, it extended to the military. On December 20, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars decreed the formation of a political police force, the Cheka. Significantly, its first headquarters were at Gorokhovaia 2, which under the Tsar housed his notorious security service, the Okhrana.[74] The Cheka quickly became a key and infamous instrument of state repression. In addition, in March 1918, Trotsky eliminated the soldier's committees and elected officers, stating that "the principle of election is politically purposeless and technically inexpedient, and it has been, in practice, abolished by decree."[75] In May, the Bolsheviks appointed a general commissar of the Baltic Fleet, disbanding its elected central committee. This was part of a general "emasculation and subsequent destruction of its grass-roots democracy of base committees."[76]

If, as Lenin argued in 1917, the state is "a power which arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it" and "consists of special bodies of armed men" separate from the people,[77] then by early 1918 the so-called workers'

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developed between the classes in motion and the interests of the party machines," which saw Bolshevik Party cadres "inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests and the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown. What, then, could be expected of these cadres when they became an all-powerful state bureaucracy?"; *Stalin*, 101, 298. However, it must be stressed that the Bolshevik Party was not in practice the completely centralised machine of Stalinist and Trotskyist myths. Substantial local autonomy coexisted with bureaucratic and centralised tendencies, with the latter finally crushing the former during the civil war and helping to ensure the degeneration of the revolution; see my *An Anarchist FAQ*, vol. 2, section H.5.12, for discussion.

73 Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 96–97.

74 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 85.

75 *How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky*, vol. 1 (London: New Park Publications, 1979), 47.

76 Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917–1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 190–91.

77 Lenin, "The State and Revolution," 316.

state had become a state in the normal sense of the word. As anarchists had predicted:

> And, in fact, what do we find throughout history? The State has always been the patrimony of some privileged class: a priestly class, an aristocratic class, a bourgeois class. And finally, when all the other classes have exhausted themselves, the State then becomes the patrimony of the bureaucratic class and then falls—or, if you will, rises—to the position of a machine. But in any case it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of the State that there should be some privileged class devoted to its preservation.[78]

Trotskyists usually follow Trotsky's self-serving 1930s account of the rise of the bureaucracy in which he lamented how the "demobilisation of the Red Army of five million [in 1921] played no small role in the formation of the bureaucracy. The victorious commanders assumed leading posts in the local Soviets, in economy, in education, and they persistently introduced everywhere that regime which had ensured success in the civil war." For some reason he failed to mention who had introduced that regime in the army in the first place, although he felt able to state, without shame, given that he was the one to abolish it in early 1918, that the "commanding staff needs democratic control. The organisers of the Red Army were aware of this from the beginning, and considered it necessary to prepare for such a measure as the election of commanding staff."[79] As shown, this account is simply false—the rise of bureaucracy predated the formation of the Red Army, never mind its demobilisation in 1921, and Bolshevik policies like one-man

78 Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 318.

79 Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 90, 211. Compare to Trotsky in 1920: "every class prefers to have in its service those of its members who . . . have passed through the military school . . . when a former regimental commissary returns to his trade union, he becomes not a bad organiser"; *Terrorism and Communism: A Reply to Karl Kautsky* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 173.

management had been imposed from April 1918 onward. So when, in 1935, Trotsky argued that it was in 1928 that the "bureaucracy succeeded . . . in breaking up . . . the Soviets . . . which were left in name only" and "power passed from the masses . . . to a centralised bureaucracy," he was out by a mere ten years.[80]

All this shows how right Voline was—echoing the arguments of Bakunin and Kropotkin—to stress the contradiction between statism and revolution, that statism creates a privileged caste and reduces the masses to a passive role in what should be *their* revolution (Book II, Part III, Chapter 2). However, the rise of this new class, the state-party bureaucracy, was not unchallenged. These special bodies of armed men were utilised to secure the power of a new ruling class against those it claimed to represent, the Russian workers and peasants. We now turn to this popular opposition.[81]

Working-Class Protest and Rebellion

Space precludes an extensive account of working-class resistance to the emerging new class, so here we present a sketch.[82] This protest took many forms, from strikes in one or two workplaces up to waves of general strikes. In response, the party utilised martial law, lockouts, denial of rations, arrest of "ringleaders," selective rehiring, shootings, and so forth. Unsurprisingly, this mass collective struggle is ignored or downplayed in Leninist accounts of

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80 "Introduction to the Second English Edition," in *Terrorism and Communism*, xliv.

81 This is not to suggest that the Bolsheviks were happy with all the bureaucrats they had created. Far from it, as can be seen from their many words attacking the phenomenon. The problem was that they had no idea what produced it nor any idea how to solve it. Failing to understand that their own prejudices in favour of centralisation and nationalisation were the root causes, their solutions were more of the same—the evils of bureaucracy would be solved by more centralisation, so producing more bureaucracy. Bodies created to combat bureaucracy themselves became bureaucratised. These police methods could not overcome a governmental machine and the vested interests it produced.

82 See my *An Anarchist* FAQ, vol. 2, section H.6.3, for more details.

the revolution, for, first, it is an embarrassment that the so-called proletarian state repressed workers, and, second, it is very much at odds with their attempts to defend the Bolsheviks in terms of an "exhausted" or "disappeared" working class necessitating party dictatorship.

Working-class disillusionment with the Bolsheviks appeared quickly, in part due to the Bolsheviks' inability to solve the economic crisis, which they had suggested in 1917 they easily could, but which their policies made worse. So in "the first half of 1918, some 100,000 to 150,000 workers across Russia took part in strikes, food riots and other protests, roughly on a par with labour unrest on the eve of the February Revolution."[83] Troops were used to break the protests and strikes in Petrograd[84] and elsewhere—for example, in Tula, in June 1918, the regime declared "martial law and arrested the protestors. Strikes followed and were suppressed by violence." In Sormovo, 5,000 workers went on strike after a Menshevik-SR paper was closed. Violence was "used to break the strike."[85]

Similar waves of protest and strikes took place the following year, with 1919 seeing a "new outbreak of strikes in March" across Russia, with the "pattern of repression . . . repeated." One strike culminated in the "closing of the factory, the firing of a number of workers, and the supervised re-election of its factory committee." In Astrakhan, a mass meeting of 10,000 workers was fired on by Red Army troops, killing 2,000 (another 2,000 were taken prisoner and subsequently executed).[86] Petrograd saw numerous strikes, including one in March of fifteen factories involving roughly 35,000 workers, resulting in the promise of increased rations. When these did not materialise, the strikes were launched anew. When

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83 Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China*, 201.

84 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 229–30, 231, 246–47, 254, 259; William G. Rosenberg, "Russian Labour and Bolshevik Power," in *The Workers Revolution in Russia: The View from Below*, ed. Daniel H. Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 123–27.

85 Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 105.

86 Ibid., 109.

protesting strikers at the Putilov factory "were fired upon by Cheka troops," more workplaces came out. The strikers were ordered to return to work or "the sailors and soldiers would be brought in," which they were. More strikes broke out in July and September, involving around 25,000 workers, and the Cheka was again sent in.[87] As Vladimir Brovkin argues in his account of the strikes and protests of 1919:

> Data on one strike in one city may be dismissed as incidental. When, however, evidence is available from various sources on simultaneous independent strikes in different cities an overall picture begins to emerge. All strikes developed along a similar timetable: February, brewing discontent; March and April, peak of strikes; May, slackening in strikes; and June and July, a new wave of strikes. . . . Workers' unrest took place in Russia's biggest and most important industrial centres. . . . Strikes affected the largest industries, primarily those involving metal: metallurgical, locomotive, and armaments plants. . . . In some cities . . . textile and other workers were active protesters as well. In at least five cities . . . the protests resembled general strikes.[88]

There were similar waves of strikes and protests in 1920. In fact, strike action "remained endemic in the first nine months of 1920." Soviet figures report a total of 146 strikes, involving 135,442 workers for the twenty-six provinces covered. In Petrograd province, there were 73 strikes with 85,642 participants. "This is a high figure indeed, since at this time . . . there were 109,100 workers" in the province. Overall, "the geographical extent of the February–March strike wave is impressive" and the "harsh discipline that

87 Mary McAuley, *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Petrograd 1917–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 250–54.

88 Vladimir Brovkin, "Workers' Unrest and the Bolsheviks' Response in 1919," *Slavic Review* 49, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 370.

went with labour militarisation led to an increase in industrial unrest in 1920."[89]

Saratov, for example, saw a wave of factory occupations break out in June, and mill workers went out in July, while in August strikes and walkouts occurred in its mills and other factories and these "prompted a spate of arrests and repression." In September, railroad workers went out on strike, with arrests making "the situation worse, forcing the administration to accept the workers' demands."[90] Likewise, the "largest strike in Moscow in the summer of 1920" was by tram workers over the equalisation of rations. It began on August 12, when one tram depot went on strike, quickly followed by others, while workers "in other industries joined in too." The tram workers "stayed out a further two days before being driven back by arrests and threats of mass sackings." In the textile manufacturing towns around Moscow "there were large-scale strikes" in November 1920, with a thousand workers striking for four days in one district, and a strike of five hundred mill workers saw three thousand workers from another mill joining in.[91]

Strikes continued and "[b]y the beginning of 1921 a revolutionary situation with workers in the vanguard had emerged in Soviet Russia," with "the simultaneous outbreak of strikes in Petrograd and Moscow and in other industrial regions." In February and March, "industrial unrest broke out in a nation-wide wave of discontent or *volynka*. General strikes, or very widespread unrest" hit all but one of the country's major industrial regions and "workers' protest consisted not just of strikes but also of factory occupations, 'Italian strikes,'[92] demonstrations, mass meetings, the beating up of communists and so on." Rather than admit it was a mass strike,

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89 Jonathan Aves, *Workers against Lenin: Labour Protest and the Bolshevik Dictatorship* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), 69, 70, 80.

90 Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War*, 375.

91 Simon Pirani, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat, 1920–24: Soviet Workers and the New Communist Elite* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 32, 43.

92 These were strikes in which workers occupied their workplaces and kept the machines running to waste fuel; Aves, *Workers against Lenin*, 115.

the Bolsheviks "usually employed the word *volynka*, which means only a 'go-slow.'"[93]

As an example, in May 1921, a strike wave in Ekaterinoslavl (in Ukraine) started in the railway workshops and became "quickly politicised," with the strike committee raising a "series of political ultimatums that were very similar in content to the demands of the Kronstadt rebels." The strike "spread to the other workshops" and on June 1 the main large Ekaterinoslavl factories joined the strike. Trains and telegraph were used to spread the strike, and soon an area up to fifty miles around the town was affected. The strike was finally ended by the Cheka, using mass arrests and shootings. Unsurprisingly, the local communists called the revolt a "little Kronstadt."[94]

Repression "did not prevent strikes and other forms of protest by workers becoming endemic in 1919 and 1920," while in early 1921 the Communist Party "faced what amounted to a revolutionary situation. Industrial unrest was only one aspect of a more general crisis that encompassed the Kronstadt revolt and the peasant rising in Tambov and Western Siberia." This "industrial unrest represented a serious political threat to the Soviet regime." For from "Ekaterinburg to Moscow, from Petrograd to Ekaterinoslavl, workers took to the streets, often in support of political slogans that called for the end of Communist Party rule." Unsurprisingly, "soldiers in many of the strike areas showed themselves to be unreliable [but] the regime was able to muster enough forces to master the situation. Soldiers could be replaced by Chekists, officer cadets and other special units where Party members predominated."[95]

There was substantial collective action throughout the civil war, but it was directed *against* the Bolshevik regime. This shows that attempts by the defenders of Bolshevism to proclaim that the working class had "disintegrated" and been reduced "to an

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93 Ibid., 3, 109–12. Also see Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 111; Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), 37–38.

94 Aves, *Workers against Lenin*, 171–73.

95 Ibid., 155, 186, 187.

atomised, individualised mass, a fraction of its former size, and no longer able to exercise the collective power that it had done in 1917" have little foundation.[96] For "if the proletariat was that exhausted how come it was still capable of waging virtually total general strikes in the largest and most heavily industrialised cities?"[97]

True, the number of workers in the cities did decline significantly, but "a sizeable core of veteran urban proletarians remained . . . they did not all disappear." In fact, "it was the loss of young activists rather than of all skilled and class-conscious urban workers that caused the level of Bolshevik support to decline during the Civil War. Older workers had tended to support the Menshevik Party in 1917." Given this, "it appears that the Bolshevik Party made deurbanisation and declassing the scapegoats for its political difficulties when the party's own policies and its unwillingness to accept changing proletarian attitudes were also to blame." It should also be noted that the notion of declassing to rationalise the party's misfortunes was used long before the civil war: "This was the same argument used to explain the Bolsheviks' lack of success among workers in the early months of 1917—that the cadres of conscious proletarians were diluted by nonproletarian elements."[98]

It must be stressed that the notion of a "declassed" proletariat was first raised by Lenin in response to this mass working-class protest. "As discontent among workers became more and more difficult to ignore," Lenin "began to argue that the consciousness of the working class had deteriorated," workers "had become 'declassed.'" However, there "is little evidence to suggest that the demands that workers made at the end of 1920," when Lenin first

96 John Rees, "In Defence of October," *International Socialism* 52 (Autumn 1991): 65.

97 Ida Mett, "The Kronstadt Commune," in *Bloodstained*, 202.

98 Diane P. Koenker, "Urbanisation and Deurbanisation in the Russian Revolution and Civil War," in *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War*, ed. Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989), 84, 95, 96, 100. Also see Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War*, 348.

formulated this excuse, "represented a fundamental change in aspirations since 1917."[99] So while the "working class had decreased in size and changed in composition," the "protest movement from late 1920 made clear that it was not a negligible force and that in an inchoate way it retained a vision of socialism which was not identified entirely with Bolshevik power." Thus, Lenin's argument "on the declassing of the proletariat was more a way of avoiding this unpleasant truth than a real reflection of what remained, in Moscow at least, a substantial physical and ideological force."[100]

Given these waves of proletarian unrest, the next usually more powerful than the last, there *was* a social base for a collective response to the problems of the revolution as anarchists argue—but the Bolsheviks could not base themselves on it because it was directed against them and their pretentions to know better than the workers what their interests really were. An "atomised" class does not need martial law to tame its general strikes. In such circumstances, it is easy to see how the state became increasingly independent from the working class—it had to in order to maintain Bolshevik rule over the workers. This empowered the already emerging bureaucracy and so paved the way for Stalinism.

Given this repression of workers by the so-called workers' state, it is ironic to read one Leninist argue that the rise of Stalinism was achieved "by administrative terror, not by the more normal means of counter-revolutionary seizure of power. . . . No wider use of force was necessary, no martial law, no curfew or street battles."[101] He forgets that all these had been used against striking and protesting workers by Lenin and Trotsky, and if there was "atomisation of the working class," this had been achieved in 1921 by their methods of martial law, curfews, and so on.[102]

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99 Aves, *Workers against Lenin*, 18, 90–91.

100 Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 261.

101 Rees, "In Defence of October," 69.

102 Of the 17,000 camp detainees on whom statistical information was available on November 1, 1920, peasants and workers constituted the largest groups, at 39 per cent and 34 per cent respectively. Similarly, of the 40,913

Ultimately, Lenin was right to argue that "it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence." If the working class is being suppressed by "the vanguard of the oppressed" then there is "no freedom and no democracy" for the working class and it cannot be "the ruling class." The party and its state is.[103]

Alternatives

The standard response to these points is that we have failed to discuss the Russian Civil War, the White Armies, and imperialist intervention. There is a reason for this—all of the (negative) developments that latter-day Leninists from Trotsky onward blame on the civil war started before it. The path to state capitalist party dictatorship was well trod before the Czech Legion rebelled in May 1918—and the repression did not end with the final defeat of the Whites in November 1920.

So from "the first days of Bolshevik power there was only a weak correlation between the extent of 'peace' and the mildness or severity of Bolshevik rule, between the intensity of the war and the intensity of proto-war communist measures. . . . Considered in ideological terms there was little to distinguish the 'breathing space' (April–May 1918) from the war communism that followed." Unsurprisingly, then, "the breathing space of the first months of 1920 after the victories over Kolchak and Denikin . . . saw their intensification and the militarisation of labour" and, in fact, "no serious attempt was made to review the aptness of war communist

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prisoners held in December 1921 (of whom 44 per cent had been committed by the Cheka) nearly 84 per cent were illiterate or minimally educated, clearly, therefore, either peasants or workers; George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 178.

103 Lenin, "The State and Revolution," 373. Unsurprisingly, Trotsky argued that the proletariat was the ruling class under Stalin for the "anatomy of society is determined by its economic relations. So long as the forms of property that have been created by the October Revolution are not overthrown, the proletariat remains the ruling class"; *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1933–34* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2003), 125.

policies." Ideology "constantly impinged on the choices made at various points of the civil war," so "Bolshevik authoritarianism cannot be ascribed simply to the Tsarist legacy or to adverse circumstances."[104]

Bolshevik ideology played a key role in the degeneration of the revolution—as can be seen in the structures favoured and how socialism was envisioned. These interacted, for a perspective favouring centralised, top-down organisations creates such structures, and these, in turn, shape the views and actions of those placed into power within these hierarchies. The party's "mentality was more than just a mentality: after the seizure of power, it almost immediately became a part of the *real social situation*. . . . If it is true that people's real social existence determines their consciousness, it is from that moment illusory to expect the Bolshevik Party to act in any other fashion than according to its real social situation."[105] It acted as every ruling class has because it had become a new master class.

To secure its rule, the party had to build a state machine separate from the masses, so it did. Its vision of socialism and its privileged role for the party played their part. Yet a political master class without an economic base is weak and, unsurprisingly, the party quickly merged with the bureaucracy. The conflicts between Trotskyism and Stalinism represented a conflict between the wings of the bureaucracy—the latter embracing its true nature, while the former denied it and were imprisoned, driven into exile, or murdered as a result, suffering the fate it had inflicted on oppositional groupings outside the party while it had been in power.[106]

The invocation of the civil war as the rationale for Bolshevik authoritarianism rings hollow, particularly as anarchists were not

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104 Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 24, 27, 30.

105 Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy," in *Bloodstained*, 287–88.

106 "Outraged by the Opposition, they [the Stalinists] saw it as treason against them; which in a sense it was, since the Opposition itself belonged to the ruling bureaucracy"; Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 263.

as naive as Lenin suggested in *The State and Revolution*. The libertarian critique of the so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat" has nothing to do with failing to see the necessity of defending a revolution. Likewise, regardless of Lenin's lecturing, anarchists had seen long before 1917 that federations of working-class organisations would be the framework of a free society. Again, notwithstanding Lenin's assertion in 1917, anarchists do not believe in "overnight" revolutions. Anarchist "impatience with the Bolshevik regime"—as Emma Goldman argued—is not down to a "belief that a revolution *à la Bakunin* would have brought more constructive results, if not immediate anarchism. Yet as a matter of fact the Russian Revolution had been *à la Bakunin,* but it had since been transformed *à la Karl Marx*. That seemed to be the real trouble. I had not been naive enough to expect anarchism to rise phoenix-like from the ashes of the old. But I did hope that the masses, who had made the Revolution, would also have the chance to direct its course."[107] Indeed, Bolshevism simply confirmed anarchist predictions:

> The anarchists consider . . . that to hand over to the State all the main sources of economical life—the land, the mines, the railways, banking, insurance, and so on—as also the management of all the main branches of industry, in addition to all the functions already accumulated in its hands . . . would mean to create a new instrument of tyranny. State capitalism would only increase the powers of bureaucracy and capitalism. True progress lies in the direction of decentralisation, both *territorial* and *functional*, in the development of the spirit of local and personal initiative, and of free federation from the simple to the compound, in lieu of the present hierarchy from the centre to the periphery.[108]

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107 Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2, 826.

108 Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle against Capital*, 165. In 1920, Kropotkin said to Emma Goldman that the Bolsheviks had "created a bureaucracy and officialdom which surpasses even that of the old regime. . . . All those people were living off the masses. They were parasites on the social body. . . . It

The question is whether this is armchair theorising or whether there were libertarian alternatives to Leninism. The answer is yes, there were libertarian alternatives.

As noted, soviet democracy did not die a natural death, the soviets were systematically marginalised—disbanded, if need be—by the Bolsheviks in favour of party power. For example, after the civil war "non-party workers were willing and able to participate in political processes, but, in the Moscow soviet and elsewhere, were pushed out of them by the Bolsheviks."[109] Indeed, as the substantial working-class protest already sketched shows, there was substantial collective action upon which soviet democracy could have been based before, during, and after the civil war.

Economically, anarchists argued that workers' unions or federations of factory committees should manage production and it should be noted that rates of "output and productivity began to climb steadily after" January 1918: "In some factories, production doubled or tripled in the early months of 1918," and "[m]any of the reports explicitly credited the factory committees for these increases." In Petrograd, they ensured "industry did not completely collapse" and fuel was "rationally and equitably" shared, while in the Urals the economy "was maintained throughout the winter and spring of 1918 on the basis of workers' self-management." They "achieved a notable degree of organisation and coordination," thereby "helping to maintain production and the exchange of scarce resources."[110] There is "evidence that until late 1919, some factory committees performed managerial tasks successfully. In some regions factories were still active thanks to their workers' initiatives in securing raw materials."[111] While this may be dismissed

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was not the fault of any particular individuals: rather it was the State they had created, which discredits every revolutionary ideal, stifles all initiative, and sets a premium on incompetence and waste"; Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*, 113.

109 Pirani, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat*, 4.

110 Sirianni, *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy*, 109, 113, 115, 129.

111 Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism*, 101.

as speculation based on a few examples, we cannot avoid recognising that turning the economy over to the bureaucracy coincided with the deepening of the economic crisis.

Alternatives existed, and Voline discusses two in detail—the Kronstadt uprising of 1921 and the Makhnovist movement of 1918–1921.[112] Here we supplement his account by addressing some of the attacks Leninists subject these movements to. We will also cover Bolshevik oppositional tendencies and compare these to the libertarian ones to better evaluate both and see which ones were genuinely utopian.

Sadly, the defenders of Bolshevism habitually selectively quote, distort the facts, and slander those movements that presented an alternative—not least the Makhnovists and Kronstadt. While we cover some of the most important myths here, we cannot cover everything. Another issue is the ideological blindness of Bolshevism. For example, Trotskyist John G. Wright argued the following in his defence of the Bolshevik crushing of Kronstadt:

> The supposition that the soldiers and sailors could venture upon an insurrection under an abstract political slogan of "free soviets" is absurd in itself. It is doubly absurd in the view of the fact [!] that the rest of the Kronstadt garrison consisted of backward and passive people who could not be used in the civil war. These people could have been moved to an insurrection only by profound economic needs and interests. These were the needs and interests of the fathers and brothers of these sailors and soldiers, that is, of peasants as traders in food products and raw materials.[113] In other words the mutiny was

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112 As well as providing key selections from the works of numerous anarchists, Daniel Guérin, *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005) also includes texts on and by both the Makhnovist movement and the Kronstadt rebels.

113 According to Trotsky, even acting in the interests of their relatives was beyond them: "They themselves did not clearly understand that what their fathers and brothers needed first of all was free trade"; V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, *Kronstadt* (New York: Monad Press, 1986), 92.This is

> the expression of the petty bourgeoisie's reaction against the difficulties and privations imposed by the proletarian revolution. Nobody can deny this class character of the two camps.[114]

Ignoring his dismissal of working-class people who—even after years of revolution—apparently cannot exceed a trade union consciousness nor act in their *own* interests, Wright fails to recognise the obvious: that there were more than "two camps." As well as urban and rural workers (proletarians and peasants), there was also the state with *its* interests. Moreover, there was also the ideology of the ruling party that had long argued for the necessity of party dictatorship and the dangers of working-class democracy. The notion of two classes or two camps is absurd in the face of the actual facts—the new class of bureaucrats and commissars needs to be factored in to fully understand the situation and the alternatives to it.

That these alternatives share many of the features proclaimed by the Bolsheviks in 1917 makes the orthodox Leninist position strange, to say the least. Here we seek to address some of the distortions and show why genuine socialists should embrace these

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the standard Trotskyist work on the rebellion and gathers all the related articles by Lenin and Trotsky, as well as articles by their faithful followers. The Kronstadt "rebels proclaimed that 'Kronstadt is not asking for freedom of trade but for genuine power to the Soviets.' The Petrograd strikers were also demanding the reopening of the markets and the abolition of the road blocks set up by the militia. But they too were stating that freedom of trade by itself would not solve their problems"; Ida Mett, "The Kronstadt Commune," in *Bloodstained*, 197–98. Indeed, striking workers in both Moscow and Petrograd raised the demand for "free trade" among others; Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 36, 42.

114 Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt* 111–12. It must be stressed that economic demands number four of the fifteen raised (items 8, 9, 11, 15), and so the focus of the uprising was political rights. Significantly, the Petrograd Bolshevik leaders had quickly granted item 8—the removal of roadblock troops—to placate striking workers in Petrograd; Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 49, 75. Unlike the Bolshevik New Economic Policy, items 11 and 15, while demanding artisan and peasant "freedom of action," also explicitly opposed the employment of hired labour. Which means that if anyone was defending the interests of the kulaks, it was Lenin and Trotsky.

alternatives, which remained true to the spirit of 1917, unlike the various oppositions within the Bolshevik Party.

The Makhnovist Movement

Voline was active in the Makhnovist movement, and while the bulk of his account (Book III, Part II) consists of extracts from fellow anarchist Peter Arshinov's earlier account, he adds useful additional commentary indicating its importance; here we have a mass movement, operating in the same (arguably worse) "objective circumstances" as the Bolshevik regime but producing remarkably different outcomes.[115]

While the Bolsheviks systematically destroyed soviet, economic, and military democracy, repressed the freedom of association, speech, and assembly of the working classes, and ideologically justified party dictatorship, the Makhnovists did the opposite. They encouraged soviet, economic, and military self-management, as well as ensuring freedoms for workers and peasants. Indeed, they came into conflict with the Bolsheviks twice in 1919 precisely because they had the gall to involve the working masses in the fate of the revolution. Their importance is summarised by the Makhnovists' response to a Bolshevik commander's proclamation banning a conference called to do precisely that:

> Have you the right, you alone, to label as counter-revolutionaries upwards of one million workers who have, with their

115 Peter Arshinov, *The History of the Makhnovist Movement* (London: Freedom Press, 2005). Also see Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack: The Struggle for Free Soviets in the Ukraine 1917–1921* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004); Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War* (London: MacMillan Publishers, 1982); Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976). Makhno's memoirs are now available in English in three volumes, although these cover only March 1917 to the end of 1918; *The Russian Revolution in Ukraine* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2007), *Under the Blows of the Counterrevolution* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009), and *The Ukrainian Revolution* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2011).

> horny hands, cast off the shackles of slavery and henceforth look to themselves for the reshaping of their lives as they see fit. . . . If you be a genuine revolutionary, you must help them in their struggle against the oppressors and in the building of a new and free life. Can it be that laws laid down by a handful of individuals, describing themselves as revolutionaries, can afford them the right to declare outside of the law an entire people more revolutionary than themselves? . . . Is there some law according to which a revolutionary is alleged to have the right to enforce the harshest punishment against the revolutionary mass on whose behalf he fights, and this because that same mass has secured for itself the benefits that the revolutionary promised them . . . freedom and equality? Can that mass remain silent when the "revolutionary" strips it of the freedom which it has just won? . . . What interests should the revolutionary defend? Those of the party? Or those of the people at the cost of whose blood the revolution has been set in motion?[116]

The strange thing is that the Makhnovists were seeking to keep to the ideals that Leninists *say* they subscribe to. Yet their hatred of the movement knows few bounds and their attacks little more than inventions parroted from previous inaccurate Leninist attacks or, when footnotes are used, selective quoting of the most shameful kind.[117] All this rather than admit the facts; all this rather than admit the elemental truth articulated by Makhno, as quoted by Voline:

> Conquer or die—such is the dilemma which faces the Ukrainian peasants and workers at this historic moment. . . . But we will not conquer in order to repeat the errors of the

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116 Quoted in Skirda, *Nestor Makhno*, 94–95.

117 See, as an example, Rees, "In Defence of October," 57–60. For my reply to another such attack, see "On the Bolshevik Myth," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 47 (Summer 2007).

> past years, that of putting our fate into the hands of new masters. We will conquer in order to take our destinies into our own hands, to conduct our lives according to our own will and our own conception of the truth.

Ultimately, for all its failings and faults, the Makhnovist movement shows that the libertarian ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin were a viable alternative to Marxist notions of revolution. So it is understandable that Marxists seek to discredit it by any means available.

Anti-Semitic Kulaks?

The main line of attack on the Makhnovists by Leninists is expressed by Victor Serge in 1920 when he was a loyal functionary, namely that the Makhnovists "speculated on the spirit of small land-ownership of the peasants, on their nationalism, even on anti-Semitism, all of which had dreadful consequences."[118] These claims are often supplemented by other charges, such as the Makhnovists being "kulaks" (wealthy peasants who hired labour), joining the Whites, and being anti–working class. All these claims are easy to refute. We will start by quoting Serge from 1938 when he had reclaimed his independence somewhat:

> Makhno's Black Army was often accused of anti-Semitism. There were anti-Semitic excesses carried out by all parties in Ukraine, but not where the Blacks were truly masters of their movements, as Soviet authors were forced to recognise. In communist publications they denounced this as a movement of well-off peasants. This is not true. Conscientious research carried out under the aegis of the Historical Commission of the Communist Party of the USSR established that poor and middle peasants formed the majority of Makhno's troops.[119]

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118 Victor Serge, *Anarchists Never Surrender: Essays, Polemics, and Correspondence on Anarchism, 1908–1938* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015), 169.

119 Ibid., 223.

The charge of anti-Semitism is refuted in some detail by both Arshinov and Voline (the latter of Jewish origin, like many of the troops and anarchists involved with the Makhnovists) and serious research has always confirmed their conclusions.[120] The only people today who repeat the charge in the face of this evidence are orthodox Trotskyists who also ignore the documented fact that Red Army troops carried out pogroms.[121]

As for the claim it was a movement of "kulaks," this seem to forget that there had been a revolution in the countryside that had equalised wealth considerably[122] and that "the Makhnovist movement could hardly have lasted four years supported by, at most, 20 per cent of the population."[123] This is confirmed by Trotsky himself who once opined that "Makhnovism has not been liquidated with the liquidation of Makhno: it has its roots in the ignorant masses."[124] As one historian notes, "Makhno and his associates brought sociopolitical issues into the daily life of the people, who

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120 Paul Avrich, "Nestor Makhno: The Man and the Myth," in *Anarchist Portraits*, 122–23; Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 168–74.

121 Of course, this was in spite of the official Bolshevik position opposing all forms of anti-Semitism. As with the Red Army, while it is possible that a few troops fighting under the Makhnovist banner (or claiming to) carried out pogroms on Jews, this was in opposition to Makhnovist policy (a policy ruthlessly applied). That the Trotskyists do not apply the same perspective to the Makhnovists is typical of their double standards. However, this is speculation, as no evidence has been forthcoming on Makhnovist pogroms, unlike Red Army ones.

122 Overall, the "redistribution of the land, the stock, and inventory in the years 1917–1920 resulted in considerable social levelling and an aggregate downward shift among the peasantry"; Sirianni, *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy*, 177; "Peasants' economic conditions in the region of the Makhno movement were greatly improved at the expense of the estates of the landlords, the church, monasteries, and the richest peasants"; Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 214.

123 Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 119. Skirda presents some statistics on captured Makhnovist troops in 1921 that show that 208 out 265 had no land or just the minimum needed to support a household; *Nestor Makhno*, 310.

124 *How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky*, vol. 2 (London: New Park Publications, 1979), 302.

in turn supported his efforts, hoping to expedite the expropriation of large estates because they feared that 'the revolution would be destroyed, and we would again remain without land.'"[125] In terms of specific policies, a Makhnovist-organised congress passed the following resolution:

> [I]n the interests of socialism and the struggle against the bourgeoisie, all land should be transferred to the hands of the toiling peasants. According to the principle that "the land belongs to nobody" and can be used only by those who care about it, who cultivate it, the land should be transferred to the toiling peasantry of Ukraine for their use without pay according to the norm of equal distribution.[126]

It should also be stressed that those who attack the Makhnovists as "kulaks" usually fail to mention that Bolshevik land policy was a complete disaster and caused endless conflict with *all* the peasantry (indeed, the "poorer the areas, the more dissatisfied were the peasants with the Bolshevik decrees").[127] This, in turn, worsened the food supply problems for the towns. You would think avoiding such a complete failure would have been something in the Makhnovists' favour, particularly when the Bolsheviks finally introduced a land policy similar to that of the Makhnovists in early 1920.

In terms of working with the Whites, no such thing ever occurred. As Serge acknowledged, there were "strenuous calumnies put out by the Communist Party" against Makhno "which went so far as to accuse him of signing pacts with the Whites at the very moment when he was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against them."[128] Indeed, the Makhnovists played the key role in the defeat of both Denikin and Wrangel.

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125 Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 71.
126 Quoted in Ibid., 155.
127 Ibid., 156.
128 Serge, *Memoirs*, 143.

The conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Makhnovists was driven by politics—the driving necessity of the former to maintain its monopoly on power and the latter seeking to promote popular self-government whenever they could. This conflict in turn resulted in the counter-revolution taking advantage of the situation. For example:

> Once Trotsky's Red Army had crushed Iudenich and Kolchak and driven Deniken's forces back upon their bases in the Crimea and the Kuban, it turned upon Makhno's partisan forces with a vengeance. . . . [I]n mid-January 1920, after a typhus epidemic had decimated his forces, a re-established Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party declared Makhno an outlaw. Yet the Bolsheviks could not free themselves from Makhno's grasp so easily, and it became one of the supreme ironies of the Russian Civil War that his attacks against the rear of the Red Army made it possible for the resurrected White armies . . . to return briefly to the southern Ukraine in 1920.[129]

If anyone was "objectively" pro-White, it was the Bolsheviks in their refusal to allow the Makhnovists the right to apply their own ideas, a right they had won by fighting and defeating the Whites.

Nor let us forget the circumstances in which these Bolshevik betrayals took place. The country was, as Leninists constantly remind us, in a state of economic collapse. Indeed, the defenders of Bolshevism habitually blame the anti–working class and dictatorial actions and policies of the Bolsheviks on the chaos caused by the civil war. Yet here are the Bolsheviks prolonging this very civil war by turning on their allies after the defeat of the Whites. Resources that could have been used to aid the economic rebuilding of Russia and Ukraine, along with the talents and energy of the Makhnovists, were either destroyed or wasted in pointless conflict.

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129 W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 327.

Should we be surprised? Bolshevik politics and ideology played a key role in all these decisions. They were *not* driven by terrible objective circumstances (indeed, they made those circumstances worse). They were driven by an ideology that by that time was committed to party dictatorship.

"Hatred of the City and the City Workers"?

For Trotsky, the "anarchist ideas of Makhno (ignoring the state, non-recognition of the central power) corresponded to the spirit of this kulak cavalry as nothing else could. I should add that the hatred of the city and the city worker on the part of the followers of Makhno was complemented by a militant anti-Semitism."[130] We have debunked the assertions of anti-Semitism and the kulak nature of the movement, here we address the issue of "hatred" of city workers.

It is true that the Makhnovists were predominantly a peasant movement, although it must be remembered that Makhno's home, Gulyai Polye, is often described as a village in spite of boasting around twenty-five thousand inhabitants in 1917. There was industrial production in the region and, for example, Makhno was both a wage worker on a farm and in a foundry in his youth. Indeed, once returned home from prison in 1917, he organised a peasants' union and was asked for help by unionised metal workers during a (successful) strike in 1917.[131] More, as communist-anarchists, Makhno and his comrades recognised that a successful revolution required the cooperation of both peasants and proletarians—particularly in a country predominantly peasant in nature.[132] As such, the Makhnovist programme included ideas tailored to both groups of toilers as summed up by the slogan sewn onto their black flags: "*The Land to the Peasants, the Factories to the Workers.*" As their draft declaration put it:

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130 Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 80.

131 Makhno, *The Russian Revolution in Ukraine*, 34–39.

132 A good selection of articles written by Makhno in exile is collected in *The Struggle against the State and other Essays* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1996).

> [H]aving scrupulously examined the idea and the results of state take-over (nationalisation) of the means and instruments of worker production (the mines, communications, workshops, factories, etc.) as well as of the workers' organisations themselves (trades unions, factory and workshop committees, cooperatives, etc.), we can announce with certainty that there is one genuine and fair solution to the workers' question: the transfer of all the means, instruments and materials of labour, production and transportation, not to the complete disposal of the state—this new boss and exploiter which uses wage-slavery and is no less oppressive of the workers than private entrepreneurs—but to the workers' organisations and unions in natural and free association with one another and in liaison with peasant organisations through the good offices of their economic soviets.
>
> It is our conviction that only such a resolution of the labour issue will release the energy and activity of the worker masses, give a fresh boost to repair of the devastated industrial economy, render exploitation and oppression impossible . . . only the workers, with the help of their free organisations and unions, will be able to secure their release from the yoke of State and Capital (private and state alike), take over the working of mineral and coal reserves, get workshops and factories back into operation, establish equitable exchanges of products between different regions, towns and countryside, get rail traffic moving again, in short, breathe life back into the moribund shell of our economic organisation.[133]

They also applied these ideas in practice. As Voline recounts, when the Makhnovists entered a city or town they immediately announced to the population that the army did not intend to exercise political authority. The workers and peasants were invited to a congress and urged to manage their own affairs by setting

133 Skirda, *Nestor Makhno*, 375–76.

up free soviets that would carry out the will of their constituents. Economically, peasants were urged to expropriate the holdings of the landlords and the state (including all livestock and goods), while all factories, plants, mines, and other means of production were to become property of all the workers under control of their trade unions. Political parties were granted full freedom to organise and publish—with the one caveat that they could not seek to create their own revolutionary authority.

This is in stark contrast to the actions of the Bolsheviks who when entering a town or city imposed a *revkom* or "revolutionary committee." If a soviet was created, it was packed with Bolsheviks, and thus completely subservient to the leadership of the ruling party. Other parties were generally repressed or at best heavily policed. Economically, they imposed "one-man management" and expected the workers to obey the orders issued from a distant bureaucracy. Given this, it would be wise to show how Trotsky's love of the city worker was expressed at the time to better compare it to the alleged "hatred" of the Makhnovists:

> The only solution of economic difficulties that is correct from the point of view both of principle and of practice is to treat the population of the whole country as the reservoir of the necessary labour power—an almost inexhaustible reservoir—and to introduce strict order into the work of its registration, mobilisation, and utilisation . . . the course we have adopted is unquestionably the right one.[134]

> [T]he road to Socialism lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the principle of the State. . . . Just as a lamp, before going out, shoots up in a brilliant flame,

134 Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 135–36. Why principle? Perhaps because Marx and Engels had demanded "[e]stablishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture" in the "Communist Manifesto," along with calls to "centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State"; *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 490.

so the State, before disappearing, assumes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the most ruthless form of State, which embraces the life of the citizens authoritatively in every direction. . . . No organisation except the army has ever controlled man with such severe compulsion as does the State organisation of the working class in the most difficult period of transition. It is just for this reason that we speak of the militarisation of labour.[135]

It would consequently be a most crying error to confuse the question as to the supremacy of the proletariat with the question of boards of workers at the head of factories. The dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed in the abolition of private property in the means of production, in the supremacy over the whole Soviet mechanism of the collective will of the workers, and not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered. . . . I consider if the civil war had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one-man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully.[136]

[T]he State and the trade unions . . . acquire new rights of some kind over the worker. The worker does not merely bargain with the Soviet State: no, he is subordinated to the Soviet State, under its orders in every direction—for it is *his* State.[137]

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135 Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 169–70.

136 Ibid., 162–63. It should go without saying that "the collective will of the workers" was a euphemism for the rule (dictatorship) of the party.

137 Ibid., 168.

Ignoring the question of the vast and powerful state machine (bureaucracy) this would need, an obvious question is: *Was* it "his" state? Did workers run this "most ruthless form of State" to which they were "subordinated"? No:

> We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party. It is thanks to the clarity of its theoretical vision and its strong revolutionary organisation that the party has afforded to the Soviets the possibility of becoming transformed from shapeless parliaments of labour into the apparatus of the supremacy of labour. In this "substitution" of the power of the party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental, and in reality there is no substitution at all. . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat, in its very essence, signifies the immediate supremacy of the revolutionary vanguard, which relies upon the heavy masses, and, where necessary, obliges the backward tail to dress by the head.[138]

Unsurprisingly, the massive state machine required to order the subordinated worker around (and to repress them if they objected) quickly acquired class interests of its own, as anarchists had long predicted.

Regarding the lack of a Makhnovist programme for urban areas, one Leninist gave the example of Makhno's advice to railway workers in Aleksandrovsk "who had not been paid for many weeks" that they should "simply charge passengers a fair price and so generate their own wages." He states that this "advice aimed at reproducing the petit-bourgeois patterns of the countryside."[139] Trotsky, in contrast, simply "plac[ed] the railwaymen and the personnel of

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138 Ibid., 109–10.

139 Rees, "In Defence of October," 59.

the repair workshops under martial law" and "summarily ousted" the leaders of the railwaymen's trade union when they objected." The Central Administrative Body of Railways (Tsektran) he created was run by him "along strictly military and bureaucratic lines." In other words, he applied his ideas on the "militarisation of labour" in full.[140] It also failed in its own terms, for a few months after Trotsky imposed this there was a "disastrous collapse of the railway network in the winter of 1920–1."[141]

What better signifies "hatred" of the city worker? The state capitalist social relations imposed on the workers by the Bolshevik Party dictatorship or the self-managed ones within freely elected soviets recommended to the workers by Makhno? If the Makhnovist position that workers had to organise themselves to run their own workplaces was anti-proletarian, does that mean genuine proletarian policies were those pursued by the Bolsheviks? Namely, "dictatorial" one-man management, militarisation of labour, and repression of strikes?[142]

Only an ideologue could suggest that Makhno's advice (and it was advice, not a decree imposed from above as was Trotsky's) can be considered worse. Indeed, by being based on workers' self-management it was infinitely more socialist than Bolshevism's militarisation of labour. It seems paradoxical, to say the least, to proclaim that the Makhnovists had no working-class support or programme, while at the same time defending the rule of a party that would have been kicked out if workers had had genuine soviet democracy.

Those who accuse the Makhnovists in this way fail to understand the nature of anarchism. Anarchism argues that it is up to working-class people to organise their own activities. This meant that, ultimately, it was up to the railway workers *themselves* (in association with other workers) to organise their own work and

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140 Brinton, *For Workers' Power*, 361.

141 Aves, *Workers against Lenin*, 102.

142 Also, the Bolshevik state used its control of issuing wages (whether in kind or in money) to control workers, with the withdrawal of rations a key means—along with the Cheka, the army, and lockouts—to break strikes.

industry. Rather than being imposed by a few leaders, *real* socialism can only come from below, built by working people through their own efforts and their own class organisations. Anarchists can suggest ideas and solutions, but ultimately it is up to workers (and peasants) to organise their own affairs. Thus, rather than being condemned, the Makhnovist position should be praised, as it was made in a spirit of equality and encouraged workers' self-management and self-activity.

Finally, we should comment on the issue of political parties in the Makhnovist free soviet system. It is sometimes suggested that "Makhno held elections, but no parties were allowed to participate in them."[143] Such claims simply show an ignorance of both the Makhnovists and the soviet system in Bolshevik Russia and Ukraine. In terms of the former, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, and Left SRs were elected to Makhnovist-organised congresses and soviets.[144] In terms of the latter, the soviet system favoured by the Bolsheviks allowed various parties voting representation in soviet executive committees, members appointed by the parties and not elected from the soviet assembly. In addition, voting was conducted by party lists, which meant so-called delegates could be anyone. Thus, early 1920 saw a chemical factory elect left Menshevik Julius Martov as its "delegate" to the Moscow soviet, defeating that equally well-known chemical worker Vladimir Lenin

143 Rees, "In Defence of October," 60.

144 Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 111, 124. Skirda presents minutes of the Second Regional Congress in 1919, which record anarchist, Left SR, and Bolshevik delegates speaking; *Nestor Makhno*, 363–68. Voline quotes from the Makhnovists reply to Dybenko's attempt to ban the third regional congress in April 1919: "The Revolutionary Military Council . . . holds itself above the pressure and influence of all parties and only recognises the people who elected it. Its duty is to accomplish what the people have instructed it to do, and to create no obstacles to any Left Socialist party in the propagation of ideas. Consequently, if one day the Bolshevik idea succeeds among the workers, the Revolutionary Military Council . . . will necessarily be replaced by another organisation, 'more revolutionary' and more Bolshevik."

by seventy-six votes to eight.[145] Unsurprisingly, Russian anarcho-syndicalists also opposed "party lists," as these resulted in "political chatterboxes gaining entry" to soviets and "turning [them] into a talking-shop."[146]

In short, members of political parties could be and were elected to Makhnovist-organised congresses and could be and were elected to organs created by those congresses. They gained their mandate from convincing those they worked with to elect them, rather than, say, being appointed via the party leadership or as part of a party list. Like the Kronstadt rebels, the Makhnovists argued for all power to the soviets and not to parties. This did not mean banning parties, but rather ensuring their proper place and that their presence represented actual popular support for the delegate.

Ultimately, Leninist attacks on the Makhnovists are no more substantial than the response of Monty Python's King Arthur to the searing anarcho-syndicalist critique of monarchy in *The Holy Grail*: "Bloody peasants!"

The Lessons of the Makhnovist Movement

As Voline shows, the Makhnovist movement is of note simply because, while fighting a terrible civil war and facing imperialist intervention, it did not forget its ideas and aims. Indeed, it applied them to a degree that has few parallels in the history of revolutions. Strangely, given Leninists' willingness to ignore, rationalise, and defend the many deviations by the Bolsheviks from what their followers say were their core values, they are far less willing to do so for the Makhnovists. Then every failure to apply their principles completely is denounced and proclaimed a reason to reject the movement out of hand. The contrast could not be more striking.

It should go without saying that no anarchist suggests that the Makhnovist movement was perfect. Far from it—as would be expected in a life-and-death struggle against Red and White

145 Getzler, *Martov*, 202.
146 Quoted in Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 190.

tyranny, mistakes were made, injustices occurred, atrocities were committed, and principles were violated.[147] Anarchists no more hold the Makhnovists to an impossible standard than we do the Bolsheviks. The issue is whether the movement was protecting working-class autonomy and freedoms or destroying them, whether it was clearing the way for future socialist development or leading the revolution into a new class system.[148] On this criterion, the Makhnovists show that there were alternatives available and that ideology—Bolshevik ideology—was an important factor in the rise of Stalinism.

Finally, it would be remiss not to comment upon the Russian anarchist movement. If Ukraine showed the potential of an anarchism well-understood and well organised, Russia showed the opposite. There the movement was divided and disorganised, essentially built during the summer of 1917 and without long-term links with the labour movement. These features hindered the spread of anarchist influence in 1917, and while it did grow, as Voline indicates, it did not reach its full potential before the Bolsheviks repressed it. So as well as showing the importance of politics—libertarian versus authoritarian—on the outcome of the revolution, the Makhnovists show the importance of a well organised, labour-orientated anarchist movement.[149]

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147 This applies to individuals involved in the movement itself. We will not comment on Voline's claims that Makhno was an alcoholic and that some of his commanders were rapists, beyond noting that these are unsubstantiated claims, denied by others active in the movement, and that his wife and other women were insurgents and were unlikely to have tolerated such abuse; see Skirda, *Nestor Makhno*, 302, 305–6.

148 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*, 23–24; Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth*, 275–78.

149 It should be noted that while both Makhno and Voline agreed on the need for a well organised anarchist movement, they differed on how best create it. In exile during the 1920s Voline favoured a "synthesis" organisation of all anarchist tendencies, while Makhno (along with Arshinov) argued for a "Platform" based on libertarian communism. Space excludes discussion of the differences, but most of the relevant documents were gathered by fellow

The Kronstadt Uprising

The Kronstadt uprising of early 1921 was a key moment in the revolution.[150] While the revolution had been pushed in an authoritarian direction since early 1918, the crushing of this revolt for soviet democracy marked the end of the revolution—this was the point when the new class secured its final victory over the Unknown Revolution. More, it was the final straw for many libertarians who had come to Russia with the hope of aiding the revolution—not least, Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman.

The revolt is covered well by Voline (Book III, Part I).[151] Here we sketch some of the latter-day attacks on the rebels that Voline's account does not cover. It is important to stress that the revolt broke out in solidarity with a general strike in Petrograd. This is often downplayed in Leninist accounts of the uprising, while Trotsky argued that from "the class point of view" it is "extremely important to contrast the behaviour of Kronstadt to that of Petrograd in those critical days," for the "uprising did not attract the Petrograd workers. It repelled them. The stratification proceeded along class lines. The workers immediately felt that the Kronstadt mutineers stood on the opposite side of the barricades—and they supported the Soviet power. The political isolation of Kronstadt was the cause of its internal uncertainty and its military defeat."[152] This is easy to refute:

> He omits the most important reason for the seeming indifference of the workers of Petrograd. It is of importance,

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exile G.P. Maximoff in *Constructive Anarchism: The Debate on the Platform* (Sydney, AU: Monty Miller Press, 1988). Also see my *An Anarchist FAQ*, vol. 2, section J.3, for more details on anarchist organisations and their role.

150 Good accounts of the rebellion can be found in Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* and Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917–1921*.

151 Other libertarian works on Kronstadt include Ida Mett, "The Kronstadt Commune," in *Bloodstained*; Berkman, "The Kronstadt Rebellion," in *To Remain Silent Is Impossible*; Goldman, "Trotsky Protests Too Much," in *To Remain Silent is Impossible*; Ante Ciliga, "The Kronstadt Revolt," *The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly* 8 (October 1989).

152 Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 90–91.

> therefore, to point out that the campaign of slander, lies and calumny against the sailors began on the 2nd March, 1921. . . . In addition, Petrograd was put under martial law. . . . Under these iron-clad rules it was physically impossible for the workers of Petrograd to ally themselves with Kronstadt, especially as not one word of the manifestoes issued by the sailors in their paper was permitted to penetrate to the workers in Petrograd. In other words, Leon Trotsky deliberately falsifies the facts.[153]

The lies include claims that the revolt was a White plot organised by a Tsarist general (who had been appointed by Trotsky!). We will not bother with these, as no evidence has ever been presented by the Bolsheviks or their latter-day defenders to support these claims.[154] Here we concentrate on the key Leninist positions that have hardly moved since Trotsky was first forced to address the issue in the 1930s. First, that the revolt had to be crushed due to the danger of the counter-revolution and, second, that the rebel sailors of 1921 were not the heroic sailors of 1917.

Kronstadt in 1917 and 1921

So what of the sailors in 1921? Had they been there since 1917? The short answer is yes.

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153 Goldman, "Trotsky Protests Too Much," 241–42. She presents a vivid eyewitness account of the repression in Petrograd in *Living My Life*, 872–87, as does Alexander Berkman in *The Bolshevik Myth*, 246–57.

154 Paul Avrich in his research on the uprising in the 1960s unearthed a "Memorandum" by a White group but concluded it played no part in the revolt. The uprising was spontaneous and "caught the emigres off balance"; *Kronstadt 1921*, 111–12, 126–27, 212. We mention this because some Trotskyists refer to it, apparently without being able to understand it. It should also be noted that the Cheka at the time found no evidence of a conspiracy; Israel Getzler, "'The Communist Leaders' Role in the Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921 in the Light of Recently Published Archival Documents," *Revolutionary Russia* 15, no. 1 (June 2002): 25.

Academic Evan Mawdsley argues that "it seems reasonable to challenge the previous interpretation" that there had been a "marked change in the composition of the men in the fleet . . . particularly . . . at the Kronstadt Naval Base." "The composition of the DOT [Active Detachment]," he concludes, "had not fundamentally changed, and anarchistic young peasants did not predominate there. The available data suggests that the main difficulty was not . . . that the experienced sailors were being demobilised. Rather, they were not being demobilised rapidly enough." The "relevant point is length of service, and available information indicates that as many as three-quarters of the DOT ratings—the Kronstadt mutineers—had served in the fleet at least since the World War." The "majority of men seem to have been veterans of 1917," and "for the DOT as a whole on 1 January 1921, 23.5% could have been drafted before 1911, 52% from 1911 to 1918 and 24.5% after 1918." More specifically, in terms of the two battleships whose sailors played the leading role in 1921 revolt, the Petropavlovsk and the Sevastopol (both renowned since 1917 for their revolutionary zeal), he shows that "at the time of the uprising" of the 2,028 sailors, 20.2% were recruited into the navy before 1914, 59% joined in the years 1914–16, 14% in 1917 and 6.8% in the years 1918–21. So 93.2% of the sailors who launched the revolt in 1921 had been there in 1917.[155]

In his excellent account of Kronstadt between 1917 and 1921, Israel Getzler investigated this issue and presented identical conclusions. It is "certainly the case" that the "activists of the 1921 uprising had been participants of the 1917 revolutions," including the "1,900 veteran sailors of the Petropavlovsk and the Sevastopol who spearheaded it. It was certainly true of a majority of the Revolutionary Committee and of the intellectuals. . . . Likewise, at least three-quarters of the 10,000 to 12,000 sailors—the mainstay of the uprising—were old hands who had served in the navy through war and revolution." He also quotes a Bolshevik who visited Kronstadt a

155 Evan Mawdsley, "The Baltic Fleet and the Kronstadt Mutiny," *Soviet Studies* 24, no. 4 (April 1973): 508–10.

few months before the uprising, who, while concerned that "sooner or later Kronstadt's veteran sailors, who were steeled in revolutionary fire and had acquired a clear revolutionary world-view, would be replaced by inexperienced, freshly mobilised young sailors," concluded that "in Kronstadt the red sailor still predominates."[156]

Likewise, Fedotoff-White notes that "a good many" of the rebels "had had ample experience in organisational and political work since 1917. A number had long-standing associations with Anarchists and the Socialist Revolutionaries of the Left." In addition, the cruiser Rossiia had joined in the decision to re-elect the Kronstadt soviet, and its "crew consisted mostly of old seamen."[157] Moreover, the majority of the revolutionary committee were veterans of the Kronstadt soviet and the October Revolution: "Given their maturity and experience, not to speak of their keen disillusionment as former participants in the revolution, it was only natural that these seasoned bluejackets should be thrust into the forefront of the uprising."[158]

If we ignore all this evidence—as Leninists are wont to[159]—we can still query the logic of Trotsky's assertions. Writing in 1937, he argued that Kronstadt had "been completely emptied of

156 Getzler, "'The Communist Leaders' Role in the Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921," 207–8, 226.

157 Dmitri Fedotoff-White, *The Growth of the Red Army* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 138, 155.

158 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 91. Avrich did not address the issue of personal service in his book but noted in a review of Getzler's work that "Getzler draws attention to the continuity in institutions, ideology, and personnel linking 1921 with 1917. In doing so he demolishes the allegation of Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders that the majority of veteran Red sailors had, in the course of the Civil War, been replaced by politically retarded peasant recruits. . . . He shows, on the contrary, that no significant change had taken place in the fleet's political and social composition, that at least three-quarters of the sailors on active duty in 1921 had been drafted before 1918"; *Soviet Studies* 36 no. 1 (January 1984): 139–40.

159 As an example, while selectively and misleadingly quoting from Getzler's work to bolster his defence of Bolshevism, Rees fails to mention the statistical information provided in it—unsurprisingly, because the data completely destroys his argument; "In Defence of October," 61–64.

proletarian elements," as "[a]ll the sailors" belonging to the ships' crews "had become commissars, commanders, chairmen of local soviets." So Kronstadt was "denuded of all revolutionary forces" by "the winter of 1919" although he acknowledged that "a certain number of qualified workers and technicians" remained to "take care of the machinery," but these were "politically unreliable," as proven by the fact they had not been selected to fight in the civil war. As evidence, he mentions that he had wired a "request at the end of 1919, or in 1920, to 'send a group of Kronstadt sailors to this or that point,'" and they had answered, "No one left to send."[160]

It is hard to know what to make of this nonsense, as surely Trotsky would have thought it unwise for the Communist commissar at Kronstadt to leave his fortress and its ships totally unmanned? Likewise, did he not know that troops left to defend Petrograd needed a high level of technical knowledge and experience to operate the battleships and defences at Kronstadt? This meant that "[o]ne reason for the remarkable survival in Kronstadt of these veteran sailors, albeit in greatly diminished numbers, was precisely the difficulty of training, in wartime conditions, a new generation competent in the sophisticated technical skills required of Russia's ultra-modern battleships, and, indeed, in the fleet generally." This did not mean no one left, just that significant numbers had to remain through necessity. Moreover, "by the end of 1919 thousands of veteran sailors, who had served on many fronts of the civil war and in the administrative network of the expanding Soviet state, had returned to the Baltic Fleet and to Kronstadt, most by way of remobilisation."[161] Thus the idea that the sailors left and did not come back is not valid.

The available evidence shows that most of the sailors of 1921 had been there since 1917. This is also reflected in the politics raised during the uprising. Kronstadt in 1917 was *never* dominated by

160 Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 81, 87, 90.

161 Getzler, "The Communist Leaders' Role in the Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921," 197–98, 208.

the Bolsheviks. A "radical populist coalition of Maximalists and Left SRs held sway, albeit precariously, *within* Kronstadt and its Soviet," even if "*externally* Kronstadt was a loyal stronghold of the Bolshevik regime." At the time of the October Revolution, the majority of the soviet were Left SRs and SR Maximalists, and while the Bolshevik representation increased to 46 per cent in January 1918, it fell back to 29 per cent in April (compared to 21 per cent and 22 per cent for the Left and Maximalist SRs). Anarchists had a significant influence at the grassroots, as well as a few delegates in the soviet—indeed, the Kronstadt soviet voted to denounce the Bolshevik attack on the anarchists in April 1918.[162]

The politics of Kronstadt in 1917–1918 were radical populist, for the Maximalists occupied "a place in the revolutionary spectrum between the Left SR's and the anarchists while sharing elements of both." They "preached a doctrine of total revolution" and called for a "'toilers' soviet republic' founded on freely elected soviets, with a minimum of central state authority. Politically, this was identical with the objective of the Kronstadters [in 1921], and 'Power to the soviets but not the parties' had originally been a Maximalist rallying-cry." Economically, the parallels "are no less striking." They demanded that "all the land be turned over to the peasants." For industry, they rejected the Bolshevik theory and practice of "workers' control" over bourgeois administrators in favour of the "social organisation of production and its systematic direction by representatives of the toiling people." They opposed nationalisation and centralised state management in favour of socialisation and workers' self-management of production. Indeed, "[o]n nearly every important point the Kronstadt program, as set forth in the rebel *Izvestiia*, coincided with that of the Maximalists."[163]

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162 Ibid., 179–86. Populist influence in 1917–18 is confirmed by Trotsky; Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 86.

163 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 171–72. For a good introduction to the politics of the Left SRs, see Ronald I. Kowalski's "'Fellow Travellers' or Revolutionary Dreamers? The Left Social Revolutionaries after 1917," *Revolutionary Russia* 11, no. 2 (December 1998).

So we should not be surprised that Kronstadt's soviet was first disbanded by the Bolsheviks on July 9, 1918, in the wake of the Left SR "revolt." As in March 1921, the Left SR– and Maximalist SR–controlled soviet was replaced by a Bolshevik revolutionary committee.[164]

The statistical information we have presented was unavailable when anarchists wrote their accounts of the uprising. All they could go on were the facts of the uprising itself and the demands of the rebels. Based on these, it is little wonder they stressed the continuity between the Red Kronstadters of 1917 and the rebels of 1921—not least because, as Emma Goldman notes, the sailors "did in 1921 what they had done in 1917. They immediately made common cause with the workers [on strike in Petograd]. The part of the sailors in 1917 was hailed as the red pride and glory of the Revolution. Their identical part in 1921 was denounced to the whole world as counter-revolutionary treason" by the Bolsheviks. Little wonder that from when she arrived in Russia in January 1920 "until Kronstadt was 'liquidated' the sailors of the Baltic fleet were held up [by all] as the glorious example of valour and unflinching courage."[165] As the evidence shows, those who did so—including leading Communist Party members, it must be stressed—were right. The Kronstadt rebels included many of those who took part in the 1917 revolution.

Still this line of defence by Leninists does have a political impact—rather than discussing what the uprising meant for the revolution, we have substituted a trawl through the archives of the Soviet state.

Ultimately, this line of defence is both meaningless and insulting.

Meaningless, for what if the rebels were recent recruits, rather than the seasoned sailors they actually were? They rose in solidarity with striking workers and raised a political and economic programme reflective of the aspirations of 1917, a programme that showed a clear awareness of the problems facing the revolution

164 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 302.
165 Goldman, "Trotsky Protests Too Much," 235, 237.

and a clear solution that rejected wage labour (whether private or state) in favour of working-class self-activity. That, surely, should be enough? Particularly given that no Trotskyist asks how long workers have been employed in a firm or for evidence on when their ancestors left the countryside before supporting their strikes.

Insulting, for it assumes working people—whether proletarian or peasant—cannot learn from experience and draw their own conclusions as to what is in their interests. After all, the sailors in 1905 and 1917 had been "new recruits" at one stage, but they gained political experience and class consciousness. Ironically, during 1917, "Menshevik critics were fond of carping that most Bolshevik newcomers were young lads fresh from the villages and wanting in long experience of industrial life and political activity."[166] And, indeed, it was usually these industrial "raw recruits" of 1917 (as in 1905) who helped organise soviets, strikes, and demonstrations, as well as formulating demands and raising slogans that were to the left of the Bolsheviks, ensuring that "the masses were incomparably more revolutionary than the Party, which in turn was more revolutionary than its committeemen."[167] Does this process somehow stop just because the Bolsheviks are in power?

"A Tragic Necessity"?

While some Trotskyists to this day play the statistics game, either by assertion or by invention, others take a more sophisticated approach. This is logical, for the first Leninist defence for crushing Kronstadt makes the second meaningless—*if* there were a danger of White attack then surely it makes not a jot of difference whether

166 Robert Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study of Organisational Change* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1979), 44. The "bulk [of new party members in 1917] were green recruits from among the most impatient and dissatisfied elements in the factories and garrison who knew little, if anything, about Marxism"; Alexander Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 231.

167 Trotsky, *Stalin*, 305.

the rebels were veterans of 1917 or not? It is to this defence of the Bolsheviks that we now turn, as summarised by Trotsky's final words on its repression being "a tragic necessity."[168]

Were the Whites a threat? The Kronstadt revolt broke out months after the end of the civil war in western Russia, when Wrangel fled from the Crimea in November 1920. The Bolsheviks were so unafraid of White invasion that by early 1921 they had demobilised half the Red Army (some 2,500,000 men).[169] Wrangel's forces were "dispersed and their morale sagging" and it would have taken "months . . . merely to mobilise his men and transport them from the Mediterranean to the Baltic." A second front in the south "would have meant almost certain disaster." Indeed, in a call issued by the Bolshevik Petrograd Defence Committee on March 5, they asked the rebels: "Haven't you heard what happened to Wrangel's men, who are dying like flies, in their thousands of hunger and disease?" The call goes on to add: "This is the fate that awaits you, unless you surrender within 24 hours." The French government, while feeding Wrangel's troops on humanitarian grounds, urged him "to disband," while the United States, Britain, and France refused to interfere.[170]

Lenin himself argued on March 16 that "the enemies" around the Bolshevik state were "no longer able to wage their war of intervention" and so were launching a press campaign around the revolt "with the prime object of disrupting the negotiations for a trade agreement with Britain, and the forthcoming trade agreement with America."[171]

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168 Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 98.

169 It should be noted that troops were still being used in workplaces to intimidate workers and for roadblocks to stop "speculation" in food, but in practice simply stopped peasants from bringing foodstuffs to the city—this did not stop the Bolsheviks justifying seizing food from the peasants because they would not provide it to cities. The Kronstadt sailors demanded the end of both practices (items 8 and 10).

170 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 13, 105, 117–19, 146, 219.

171 Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 52. Berkman quotes from the Communist radio on how the revolt was organised to undermine trade talks with the imperialist powers; "The Kronstadt Rebellion," 146–47.

There was no immediate military threat from the Whites or the imperialists. There were various peasant uprisings and mass strikes, but as these were driven by Bolshevik dictatorship they can hardly be used to justify it. Which leaves the question of what would have happened if Kronstadt's demand for soviet democracy had been granted. Victor Serge gives the sophisticated Leninist response:

> After many hesitations, and with unutterable anguish, my Communist friends and I finally declared ourselves on the side of the Party. This is why. Kronstadt has right on its side. Kronstadt was the beginning of a fresh, liberating revolution for popular democracy. . . . However, the country was exhausted, and production practically at a standstill; there were no reserves of any kind, not even reserves of stamina in the hearts of the masses. The working-class elite that had been moulded in the struggle against the old regime was literally decimated. The Party, swollen by the influx of power-seekers, inspired little confidence. . . . Soviet democracy lacked leadership, institutions, and inspiration; at its back there were only masses of starving and desperate men.
>
> The popular counter-revolution translated the demand for freely-elected soviets into one for "Soviets without Communists." If the Bolshevik dictatorship fell, it was only a short step to chaos, and through chaos to a peasant rising, the massacre of the Communists, the return of the emigres, and in the end, through the sheer force of events, another dictatorship, this time anti-proletarian.[172]

Some modern-day Leninists follow this line of reasoning and want us to believe that the Bolsheviks were defending the remaining gains of the revolution. What gains, exactly? The only gains that remained were Bolshevik power and nationalised industry—both of

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172 Serge, *Memoirs*, 150–51. Trotsky makes a similar argument on soviet democracy, but he generalises it to all revolutions; Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt*, 90.

which excluded the real gains of the Russian Revolution, namely soviet democracy, the right to independent unions and to strike, freedom of assembly, association, and speech for working people, the beginnings of workers' self-management of production, and so on. Indeed, both "gains" were the basis for the Stalinist bureaucracy's power.

Thus, the core problem with Serge's account is the notion that the Bolshevik dictatorship was not "anti-proletarian." This is hard to square with the reality of the regime—unless we are talking of *idealised* proletarians "sympathising instinctively with the party and carrying out the menial tasks required by the revolution"—as Serge put in it 1920—rather than *real* ones.[173] Yes, the country was "exhausted," but that was, in part, because of the struggles workers had to wage against the regime and the state repression they were met with. Likewise, production was at a standstill in part due to the bureaucratic regime the Bolsheviks were defending. Indeed, it took the Kronstadt revolt to move away from what was later termed "war communism," but was then just called "communism," and the economy revived quickly under the New Economic Policy.[174] So the potential was there—the revolt saw precisely the renewal of activity and hope within both the town and the naval base that Serge proclaimed did not exist in Russia.

Could Kronstadt's demand for soviet democracy have indirectly produced counter-revolution? Perhaps, for no revolution can be guaranteed to succeed. However, what is certain is that the

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173 Victor Serge, *Revolution in Danger: Writings from Russia, 1919–1921* (London: Redwords, 1997), 6. Writing to French anarchists, he generalised to all revolutions the necessity of "the dictatorship of *a party*," for militants "cannot rely on the consciousness, the goodwill or the determination of those they have to deal with; for the masses who will follow them or surround them will be warped by the old regime, relatively uncultivated, often unaware, torn by feelings and instincts inherited from the past" (92, 103).

174 It must be stressed that the NEP did not, as Serge asserted, mean that "[a]ll the economic demands of Kronstadt were being satisfied"; *Memoirs*, 152. The Kronstadt demands opposed wage labour in agriculture, unlike the NEP, which allowed it.

revolution had been defeated in 1921 and the degeneration became worse. The regime did not self-reform—could not self-reform given the policy of its leadership. The repression of Kronstadt meant the repression of the only political and economic programme that could have saved the revolution—for a "revolutionary" regime that oversaw the suppression of the soviet democracy and the elimination of workers from the management of industry already signified the death of the revolution.

The notion that the Bolsheviks could have encouraged some kind of proletarian "democracy" while maintaining party dictatorship is the logical conclusion of Serge's position. Yet this hope was utopian as can be seen from the fate of the "non-Party workers' and peasants' conferences," along with Soviet Congresses that Lenin pointed to in his 1920 diatribe against left-wing communism. Ignoring the awkward fact that *if* the congresses of soviets were "*democratic* institutions, the like of which even the best democratic republics of the bourgeois have never known," then the Bolsheviks would have no need to "support, develop and extend" non-Party conferences "to be able to observe the temper of the masses, come closer to them, meet their requirements, promote the best among them to state posts."[175] How the Bolsheviks met "their requirements" is extremely significant—they disbanded them, just as they had with soviets with non-Bolshevik majorities in 1918. This was because "[d]uring the disturbances" of late 1920, "they provided an effective platform for criticism of Bolshevik policies" and they "were discontinued soon afterward."[176] So even advisory forums were too much for the party, for they gave the masses a limited collective voice.

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175 Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 573.

176 Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 203. Interestingly, a workers' commission set up after a strike wave in March 1921 was disbanded under martial law in Saratov after it called—like Kronstadt—for new elections to the soviets and unions along with freedom of speech, press, and assembly; Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War*, 388–89.

Benevolent dictatorships do not exist—even if the word "proletarian" is invoked. To support the regime whose policies helped create the circumstances invoked to rationalise this decision is hardly convincing. Even less convincing is the notion that a party dictatorship marked by a massive and growing bureaucracy could reform itself, yet this is Serge's position. As the rise of Stalin showed, this was far more utopian than the hopes of the Kronstadt sailors.

The Lessons of the Kronstadt Revolt

The events of early 1921 cast a stark light on the nature of Bolshevism. Here we have a movement demanding what was promised in 1917 and being answered by bullets and cannons. Faced with a choice between soviet democracy and party power, the party—as it had since early 1918—preferred the latter and destroyed the former to secure it.

The idea of a dictatorship of the party *was* Bolshevism at the time and had been for a number of years. For example, the leading German Communist Karl Radek argued in an article written on April 1, 1921, that he was "convinced that in the light of the events at Kronstadt, the Communist elements which have so far not understood the role of the Party during the revolution, will at last learn the true value of these explanations." For "the full benefit of this lesson" is that "even when that uprising bases itself on working-class discontent" it must "be realised that, if the Communist Party can only triumph when it has the support of the mass of workers, there will nevertheless arise situations in the West where it will have to, for a certain period, keep power using solely the forces of the vanguard." He quoted an earlier article of his from 1919:

> And the mass . . . may well hesitate in the days of great difficulties, defeats, and it may even despair of victory and long to capitulate. The proletarian revolution does not bring with it an immediate relief of poverty, and in certain circumstances, it may even temporarily worsen the situation of the proletariat. The adversaries of the proletarian will take advantage of

> this opportunity to demand the government of the workers themselves; it is for this reason that it will be necessary to have a centralised Communist Party, powerful, armed with the means of the proletarian government and determined to conserve power for a certain time, even only as the Party of the revolutionary minority, while waiting for the conditions of the struggle to improve and for the morale of the masses to rise . . . there can arise situations where the revolutionary minority of the working class must shoulder the full weight of the struggle and where the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be maintained, provisionally at least, as the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

The party's "firm decision to retain power by all possible means" is "the greatest lesson of the Kronstadt events, the international lesson." Radek, needless to say, is just repeating the Bolshevik position with more than usual clarity, while "provisionally"—unsurprisingly—came to be measured in decades and was only ended by mass revolt.[177]

The lesson of Kronstadt for Bolshevism was the confirmation that soviet democracy and revolution were incompatible, that party dictatorship was an essential requirement for a "successful" revolution. Lenin did not stress this aspect of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in 1917, limiting himself to talk of the "organised control over the insignificant capitalist minority" and "over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism."[178] Sadly, he did not find the space to indicate that the word "corrupted" meant how much the workers disagreed with the party. A more circular justification for elite rule would be hard to find.

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177 Karl Radek, "The Kronstadt Uprising," accessed October 23, 2018, https://www.marxists.org/archive/radek/1921/04/kronstadt.htm. Originally published in French, "Cronstadt," *Bulletin communiste* 2 no. 19 (May 1921): 321–5; translated by Ed Maltby.

178 Lenin, "The State and Revolution," 383.

That Bolshevik authoritarianism predates the civil war indicates the flaw in another Leninist argument about the degeneration of the revolution, namely, isolation. If, we are informed, a revolution had been successful elsewhere—specifically, in Germany—then the Soviet regime could have drawn upon the resources of an advanced industrial power with a large proletariat. This would have meant the promises of October could have been saved.[179]

Yet this is unconvincing for numerous reasons. First, as indicated, the promises of October had been undermined *from the start*. Second, any revolution in Germany would have almost certainly been dominated by mainstream Marxism and also built the same centralised, hierarchical, top-down structures favoured in Russia.[180] As such, it too would have produced a new state bureaucracy (along with the bureaucracies of the centralised social democratic party and trade unions). Third, the revolution in Germany saw an economic collapse of relatively the same size as in Russia. If, as the defenders of the Bolsheviks argue, the economic crisis meant retreat in Russia, then it would surely have meant the same in Germany.[181]

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179 Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, xliii; Chris Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 1974), 11–12.

180 There were Marxists who had come to libertarian conclusions from the experience of the war, namely, the council communists. While initially dominating the newly formed German Communist Party, they were quickly displaced by orthodox Leninists, not least because of Lenin's opposition, as expressed in *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*—for a reply, see Herman Gorter, *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* (London: Wildcat, 1989). However, these—along with the fast growing anarcho-syndicalist union, the FAU—were a minority within the labour movement. See Serge Bricianer, *Pannekoek and the Workers' Councils* (Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1978) and D.A. Smart, ed., *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1978).

181 See my *An Anarchist FAQ*, vol. 2, section H.6.1, 814. I also discuss in my introduction to *Direct Struggle against Capital* how anarchists had long recognised that a revolution would face economic crisis and factored this into the libertarian theory of revolution (57–58). Significantly, leading Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin reached this position in 1920 and while this "may appear to have been an obvious point, but it apparently came as something of a revelation to many Bolsheviks. It directly opposed the

Fourth, the Bolsheviks had concluded that *any* revolution needed to follow the same path—namely centralised state capitalism and party dictatorship—and informed the world's revolutionaries of these necessities. This is why Radek was peddling this Bolshevik orthodoxy in Germany in 1919, while the Hungarian Revolution saw the short-lived Communist government of Béla Kun apply this perspective when it voided the election of anarchists and syndicalists to the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in April that year.[182] If, as Trotsky and his followers had hoped, the German revolution had succeeded in 1923 (or earlier), then the Russian bureaucracy would not have been weakened but simply joined by a German one.[183]

Actions speak louder than words. Yet it will still be argued that the Bolsheviks were only reacting to events and were violating their real, genuine core values—and their modern-day adherents would never dream of doing likewise, even if their eagerness in defending the crushing of Kronstadt suggests otherwise. It exposes those "socialists" who proclaim their opposition to Stalinism by arguing that socialism has to be democratic to be socialist: that they make an exception when the right people—Lenin and Trotsky—are the dictators suggests that not only do they not have a grasp of what socialism is, they would likewise destroy the revolution in the name of "saving" it—or at least their own power, which they equate with the revolution.

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prevailing Social Democratic assumption that the transition to socialism would be relatively painless"; Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 89.

182 Rudolf L. Tokés, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: The Origins and Role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the Revolutions of 1918–1919* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 151–52.

183 As Trotsky said to his English readers in 1935, his argument from 1920 "will turn out to be not without its use"; *Terrorism and Communism*, xlvii. Rosmer was also of the opinion that both Trotsky's *Terrorism and Communism* and Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism* had "lost none of their value" and could "still be profitably read today"; *Lenin's Moscow*, 69.

Bolshevik Oppositions

While ignoring or dismissing—when not slandering—working-class opposition (whether proletarian or peasant) to the Bolshevik regime, Marxists point to oppositional movements within the party as alternatives. As Voline mentions some of these in passing, it would be useful to sketch their positions and indicate their limitations. We concentrate on three here: the Left Communists of 1917–1918, the Workers' Opposition of 1920–1921, and the Left Opposition of the 1920s. All show the same privileging of the party over the class. All would have produced a new class system.

Voline mentions in passing meeting Nikolai Bukharin during the negotiations over peace with Germany in 1918. At the time, Bukharin was a leading member of the Left Communists in the Bolshevik Party, opposed to many of Lenin's policies beyond just the peace of Brest-Litovsk. These focused on how to build socialism, correctly objecting to Lenin's calls in early 1918 to copy the "state capitalism" of Imperial Germany and arguing for a socialism built by workers' organisations.[184] Lenin reacted sharply to criticism and defended his position, not least by noting he had given his "'high' appreciation of state capitalism . . . *before* the Bolsheviks seized power" in his *State and Revolution*, so it was "significant that [his opponents] did *not* emphasise *this*" aspect of his 1917 ideas.[185] Unsurprisingly, modern-day Leninists do not emphasise that element of Lenin's ideas either.

While the Left Communists' opposition to the state-capitalist aspects of mainstream Bolshevism is of note, they "did not comprehend that their conception of central planning was incompatible with the devolution of authority to the shop floor that they aspired to."[186] Likewise, politically they still prioritised the role and rule of the party. As one leading member put it, the Left Communists

184 Brinton, *For Workers' Power*, 337–44; Sirianni, *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy*, 142–50.

185 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 27, 341, 354.

186 Ronald I. Kowalski, *The Bolshevik Party in Conflict: The Left Communist Opposition of 1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1990), 186.

were "the most passionate proponents of soviet power, but . . . only so far as this power does not degenerate . . . in a petty-bourgeois direction."[187] The party played the key role, for it was the only true bastion of the interests of the proletariat, and so "is in every case and everywhere superior to the soviets. . . . The soviets represent labouring democracy in general; and its interest, and in particular the interests of the petty bourgeois peasantry, do not always coincide with the interests of the proletariat."[188] In short, the party had predominance over the soviets and an ideological perspective that allowed the party to ignore soviet democracy:

> Ultimately, the only criterion that they appeared able to offer was to define "proletarian" in terms of adherence to their own policy prescriptions and "nonproletarian" by non-adherence to them. In consequence, all who dared to oppose them could be accused either of being non-proletarian, or at the very least of suffering from some form of "false consciousness"—and in the interests of building socialism must recant or be purged from the party. Rather ironically, beneath the surface of their fine rhetoric in defence of the soviets, and of the party as "a forum for all of proletarian democracy," there lay a political philosophy that was arguably as authoritarian as that of which they accused Lenin and his faction.[189]

Ultimately, it is hard not to conclude that the "ideological preconceptions of the Left Communists would have spawned a centralised, bureaucratic system, not an emancipated society in which power was diffused to the workers."[190] After all, as Voline noted, Bukharin came back into the fold and he "continued to eulogise the party's dictatorship, sometimes quite unabashedly" during and after the civil war, for the "Bolsheviks no longer bothered to

187 Quoted in ibid., 135.
188 Quoted in Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 182.
189 Kowalski, *The Bolshevik Party in Conflict*, 136–37. Sakwa draws the same obvious conclusion; *Soviet Communists in Power*, 182–83.
190 Kowalski, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 188.

disclaim that . . . the dictatorship of the proletariat was the 'dictatorship of the party'" and "class immaturity was not a peculiarity of the Russian proletariat, but a characteristic of proletarian revolutions in general."[191]

The next oppositional current within the Bolshevik Party, the Workers' Opposition, is mentioned in passing by Voline but is probably the best known of the various civil war era oppositions in the party due to many works by Alexandra Kollontai being translated into English, not least the group's manifesto. Voline, however, is wrong to suggest Lenin wrote *Left-Wing Communism* explicitly against the Workers' Opposition, his focus was directed to communist movements elsewhere—in Britain, Holland, Germany, and Italy. It is true, though, that subsequently the German and Dutch council communists did seek to work with the Workers' Opposition, and British anti-parliamentarian communists did publish Kollontai's manifesto.

Kollontai, along with Alexander Shlyapnikov, championed the cause of the Workers' Opposition within the party and its congresses, unsuccessfully as they, along with all factions, were banned at the Tenth Party Congress in early 1921. Their arguments are of interest, recognising the key question of whether "we [shall] achieve Communism through the workers or over their heads, by the hands of Soviet officials?" They answered by arguing for the former and "*see[ing] in the unions the managers and creators of the communist economy*." They proposed "a system of self-activity for the masses," for "the building of Communism can and must be the work of the toiling masses themselves." Yet, as with the Left Communists, these positive ideas are undermined by the typically Marxist centralised institutional framework in which industrial unions "elect the central body directing the whole economic life of the republic."[192]

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191 Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, 142, 145.

192 Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai* (London: Allison & Busby, 1977), 174, 176, 182, 199, 200.

However, while seeking an increase in *economic* freedom for the masses, a close reading of Kollontai's text shows that her group did not seek actual workers' democracy, for the "task of the Party at its present crisis" is to "lend its ear to the healthy class call of the wide working masses," but "correction of the activity of the Party" meant "going back to democracy, freedom of opinion, and criticism inside the Party." The struggle was "for establishing democracy in the party, and for the elimination of all bureaucracy,"[193] rather than questioning party dictatorship:

> Nor did they in any form criticise the domination of the communist minority over the majority of the proletariat. The fundamental weakness of the case of the Workers' Opposition was that, while demanding more freedom of initiative for the workers, it was quite content to leave untouched the state of affairs in which a few hundred thousand imposed their will on many millions. "And since when have we been enemies of *komitetchina* [manipulation and control by communist party committees], I should like to know?" Shlyapnikov asked at the Tenth Party Congress. He went on to explain that the trade union congress in which, as he and his followers proposed, all control of industry should be vested would "of course" be composed of delegates nominated and elected "through the party cells, as we always do." But he argued that the local trade union cells would ensure the election of men qualified by experience and ability in place of those who are "imposed on us at present" by the centre. Kollontai and her supporters had no wish to disturb the communist party's monopoly of political power.[194]

Unsurprisingly, Kollontai boasted at the Tenth Party Congress on March 13, 1921, that it was members of the Workers' Opposition

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193 Kollontai, *Selected Writings*, 172, 197.

194 Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*, 294. Also see Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 182–83.

who had been "the first" to volunteer to attack Kronstadt and so "fulfil our duty in the name of Communism and the international workers' revolution."[195] Yet if the "*whole essence of bureaucracy*" is that "*[s]ome third person decides your fate*,"[196] then this position hardly combated bureaucratisation. However, even this limited expansion of workers' self-activity was too much for Lenin, who (incorrectly) denounced it as a "syndicalist deviation."

So, to varying degrees, the pre-1921 oppositions did recognise problems were developing but their solutions were primarily economic in nature and fatally handicapped due to the leading role they gave to the party and an unawareness of the part centralisation played in the creation of the bureaucracy they denounced but whose roots they did not comprehend. This is to be expected, for these were *Bolshevik* oppositions.

What of the post-1921 oppositions? Space precludes discussion of the Workers' Truth and Workers' Group splits from the party, other than that these seem to forsake party dictatorship and were the first groups of party members to be repressed by the state in a way similar to oppositional groups outside the party.[197] Instead, we will end with the Left Opposition of 1923–1928, the favoured opposition of most Leninists who tend to dismiss the previous groups.

The common perspective on the Left Opposition in Leninist circles is that it reflected the principles of 1917, that it showed—to use the words of Chris Harman, a leading member of a British Leninist party—that "there was always an alternative to Stalinism" based on "returning to genuine workers' democracy and consciously linking the fate of Russia to the fate of world revolution." The "historical merit of the Left Opposition" was that it "framed a policy along

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195 Quoted in Getzler, "The Communist Leaders' Role in the Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921," 256. Also see Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 183.

196 Kollontai, *Selected Writings*, 192.

197 Paul Avrich, "Bolshevik Opposition to Lenin: G. T. Miasnikov and the Workers' Group," *Russian Review* 43, no. 1 (January, 1984); Ante Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma* (London: Ink Links Ltd, 1979), 277–78; Pirani, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat*, 126–28, 195–98, 203–4, 214–15, 237–38.

these lines" and "did link the question of the expansion of industry with that of working-class democracy and internationalism."[198]

In reality, the Left Opposition did not support working-class democracy at all and instead denounced the "growing replacement of the party by its own apparatus [that] is promoted by a 'theory' of Stalin's which denies the Leninist principle, inviolable for every Bolshevik, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realised only through the dictatorship of the party."[199] Indeed, throughout the 1920s Trotsky defended the necessity of party dictatorship time and time again.[200]

Yet if disagreements cannot be expressed in soviet elections, then they will reappear within the ruling party itself in the shape of factions. Yet if democracy in the soviets was counter-revolutionary, how can it be revolutionary within the party? Particularly a party subject to an influx of opportunists seeking power, influence and privileges. Hence the ending of factions within the party and rule by the leadership—which, of course, cannot halt the corruption. By 1923, Trotsky starts to see this—and urges a purge of the party to cleanse it so that "workers' democracy" (within the party) can be revived, which would mean that the bureaucracy could once again be subject to the party. Would this have worked? It had not in 1921 when Lenin "proclaimed a purge of the Party, aimed at those revolutionaries who had come in from other parties—i.e., those who were not saturated with the Bolshevik mentality." This "meant the establishment within the Party of a dictatorship of the old Bolsheviks, and the direction of disciplinary measures, not

198 Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe*, 19.

199 "Platform of the Opposition," *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)* (New York: Pathfinder, 2003), 395.

200 Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, vol. 2 (London: New Park Publications, 1974), 255; *Leon Trotsky Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), 158; Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923–25)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 78–79; Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, 75–76, 439, 441; *Leon Trotsky on China* (New York: Monad Press, 2002), 251.

against the unprincipled careerists and conformist latecomers, but against those sections with a critical outlook."[201]

Economically, the Left Opposition did not even have the merit of the Left Communists or Workers' Opposition in raising economic reforms. It argued that "nationalisation of the means of production was a decisive step toward the socialist reconstruction of that whole social system which is founded upon the exploitation of man by man" and that the "appropriation of surplus value by a workers' state is not, of course, exploitation." However, it also acknowledged that "we have a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions," and that a "swollen and privileged administrative apparatus devours a very considerable part of our surplus value," while "all the data testify that the growth of wages is lagging behind the growth of the productivity of labour."[202]

So an economic regime marked by one-man management by state-appointed bosses under a party dictatorship could somehow be without exploitation, even though someone other than the workers controlled both their labour and how its product (and any surplus) was used? It is hardly surprising that the new master class sought its own benefit; what *is* surprising is that the Left Opposition could not see the reality of state capitalism. Rather, it focused its attention on the living standards of the working class and paid no attention to the relations of production in the workplace, raising no proposals nor demands about establishing workers' control of industry. Given its self-proclaimed role as defender of Leninist orthodoxy and its social position, perhaps that is not so surprising after all.

The limitations of this perspective should be clear—benevolent dictatorships do not exist, and we would expect appeals to a ruling bureaucracy to be less exploitative and oppressive would fall on deaf ears. Still, its believers refused to let reality impact on their faith, and, as Ante Ciliga recounted, even in the prison camps in

201 Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 157–58.
202 "Platform of the Opposition," 347–48, 350.

the late 1920s and early 1930s, "almost all the Trotskyists continued to consider that 'freedom of party' would be 'the end of the revolution.' 'Freedom to choose one's party—that is Menshevism,' was the Trotskyists' final verdict."[203] Their leader likewise continued to argue this into the late 1930s:

> The revolutionary dictatorship of a proletarian party is for me not a thing that one can freely accept or reject: It is an objective necessity imposed upon us by the social realities—the class struggle, the heterogeneity of the revolutionary class, the necessity for a selected vanguard in order to assure the victory. The dictatorship of a party belongs to the barbarian prehistory as does the state itself, but we cannot jump over this chapter, which can open (not at one stroke) genuine human history. . . . The revolutionary party (vanguard) which renounces its own dictatorship surrenders the masses to the counter-revolution. . . . Abstractly speaking, it would be very well if the party dictatorship could be replaced by the "dictatorship" of the whole toiling people without any party, but this presupposes such a high level of political development among the masses that it can never be achieved under capitalist conditions. The reason for the revolution comes from the circumstance that capitalism does not permit the material and the moral development of the masses.[204]

As with Kollontai, the term "workers' democracy" was used by Trotsky to mean *only* internal party democracy: "Workers' democracy means the liberty of frank discussion of the most important questions of party life by all members, and the election of all leading

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203 Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma,* 280. Ciliga has two interesting chapters ("And Now?" and "Lenin, Also") on the various factions within the Trotskyists in the camps and his own political evolution toward recognising the obvious: that the bureaucracy was the ruling class of a state capitalist regime, which had its roots in Lenin's ideas and actions.

204 Leon Trotsky, *Writings 1936–37* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), 513–14.

party functionaries and commissions."[205] As for the workers, as Trotsky explained over a decade later, the so-called workers' state was needed to repress them:

> The very same masses are at different times inspired by different moods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralised organisation of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of overcoming the vacillation of the masses themselves. . . . [I]f the dictatorship of the proletariat means anything at all, then it means that the vanguard of the proletariat is armed with the resources of the state in order to repel dangers, including those emanating from the backward layers of the proletariat itself.[206]

Of course, everyone is, *by definition*, "backward" compared to the vanguard and such a regime cannot exist without a state in "the proper sense of the word," a centralised, top-down structure by which a minority (in this case, the party leaders) rule the many (as always, the working class). As "vacillation" is expressed by elections, we have the logical basis for party dictatorship. Needless to say, here Trotsky is simply repeating what he had argued while in power:

> The "workers' opposition" puts forward dangerous slogans which fetishise the principles of democracy. Elections from within the working class were put above the party, as if the party had no right to defend its dictatorship even when this dictatorship was temporarily at odds with the passing

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205 Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923–25)*, 460.

206 Leon Trotsky, "The Moralists and Sycophants against Marxism," in *Their Morals and Ours* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973), 59. As Lenin put it at a Cheka conference in 1920: "Without revolutionary coercion directed against the avowed enemies of the workers and peasants, it is impossible to break down the resistance of these exploiters. On the other hand, revolutionary coercion is bound to be employed towards the wavering and unstable elements among the masses themselves"; V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 42 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 170.

> feelings of workers' democracy. . . . It is essential to have a sense of—so to speak—the revolutionary-historical primacy of the party, which is obliged to hold on to its dictatorship, despite the temporary waverings of the masses . . . even of the workers.[207]

We have come a long way from Lenin's assertion that the "working people need the state *only* to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and *only* the proletariat can direct this suppression, can carry it out."[208] In reality, the structure of the state—even a so-called "proletarian" one—ensured that would never come to pass, for it has its own class interests.

To conclude: all the Bolshevik alternatives are of note by what they share—namely, a dominant role for the party and a corresponding unconcern with working-class freedom and democracy. We need to remember that the only alternative raised by Leninists was formulated within the context of party rule: and Leninists like to proclaim anarchism utopian. Harman, like most Trotskyists, seems ignorant of his own political tradition, not least when this leading Trotskyist asserted that it was only *after* "Lenin's illness and subsequent death" that the "principles of October were abandoned one by one."[209]

Conclusions

No single book can hope to cover all aspects of a seismic event like the Russian Revolution nor can an introduction. However, both can give pointers to key events and key areas for further research.

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207 Quoted in Alec Nove, "Trotsky, Collectivization and the Five-Year Plan," in *Socialism, Economics and Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 100. Trotsky also added: "Formally speaking this [the creation of factory committees] is indeed the clearest line of workers' democracy. But we are against it. Why? For a basic reason, to preserve the party's dictatorship, and for subordinate reasons: management would be inefficient" (100).

208 Lenin, "The State and Revolution," 327; emphasis added.

209 Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe*, 14.

The differences Voline sketches between libertarian and authoritarian socialism remain true. The authoritarian socialist, while paying lip service to a very similar vision of revolution, ultimately argues that the libertarian approach is noble but utopian and doomed to failure as, by necessity (to quote Lenin from December 1920), "the Party, shall we say, absorbs the vanguard of the proletariat, and this vanguard exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat" for "in all capitalist countries" the proletariat "is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts" that the dictatorship "can be exercised only by a vanguard." The lesson of the revolution was clear: "the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised by a mass proletarian organisation."[210] If this is the case, the libertarian replies, then the authoritarians' so-called workers' state is also doomed, for authoritarian methods will simply replace one minority-class state by another just as despotic and remote from the people and just as unwilling to "wither away" as its capitalist predecessor. Both logic and the evidence of history show this.

Voline recounts the differences between libertarian and authoritarian socialism well, presenting both the theory and practice in a clear manner, even if he only concentrates on two events, albeit two key ones, along with somewhat sweeping overviews. These may not convince the eager Leninist who knows the rhetoric of 1917 far better than the grim reality of 1918 onward and who has read the many apologetics and rationales used to justify the latter's divergence from the former. It may, however, start the process of undermining these illusions and open a wider, bottom-up, *libertarian* perspective.

Few become members of a Leninist party (at least, when it is not in power!) seeking to create a state capitalist party dictatorship. They genuinely—at least initially—seek to liberate society from the evils of class, to see the emancipation of the working class. That the Russian Revolution started this process cannot be denied but

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210 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 20–21.

recognition that the politics of the Bolsheviks ended it will be. Voline will help that recognition of reality and show that there is an alternative that embodies the initial hopes and desires of every rebel: *anarchism*.

Simply put, every Leninist will have what could be called their personal Kronstadt—the time when they have to choose between their socialist aspirations and defending Bolshevism. We hope that the class criteria Voline stresses will be central in their thoughts. Emma Goldman put it well:

> There is another objection to my criticism on the part of the Communists. Russia is on strike, they say, and it is unethical for a revolutionist to side against the workers when they are striking against their masters. That is pure demagoguery practised by the Bolsheviki to silence criticism.
>
> It is not true that the Russian people are on strike. On the contrary, the truth of the matter is that the Russian people have been *locked out* and that the Bolshevik State—even as the bourgeois industrial master—uses the sword and the gun to keep the people out. In the case of the Bolsheviki this tyranny is masked by a world-stirring slogan: thus they have succeeded in blinding the masses. Just because I am a revolutionist I refuse to side with the master class, which in Russia is called the Communist Party.[211]

The problem is that Leninists seem unable to recognise that there *was* a master class in Soviet Russia. That their vision of socialism cannot be easily distinguished from state capitalism and that their centralised "soviet" power could so easily become party dictatorship show the poverty and limitations of their politics. Worse, given the apologetics indulged in by the various defenders of the Bolsheviks, the ritualistic invoking of "objective circumstances" and the downplaying of ideological influences on the degeneration of the revolution, we cannot help but conclude that given the

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211 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*, 25.

chance they would do exactly the same as their heroes Lenin and Trotsky—with exactly the same sorry results.

As in 1917, the issue remains that which Voline so well explained: the State *or* Revolution.

Iain McKay
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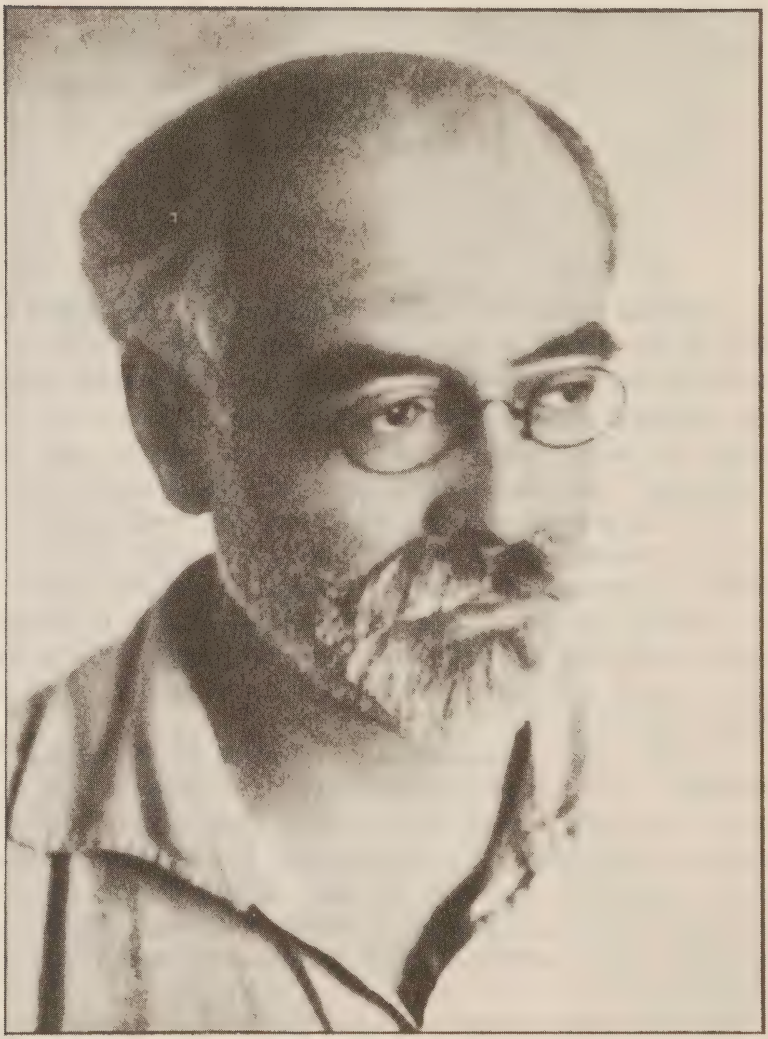
VOLINE
by Rudolph Rocker

Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eichenbaum was born on August 11, 1882, in the district of Voronezh in Great Russia. So far as I know only one of his writings, a small booklet of Russian poems, was published under his real name, while all the others, and certainly his many articles and essays, were signed with his pseudonym. It is much easier to think and speak of him as Voline.

Both his parents were medical doctors, who lived in comfortable circumstances which permitted them to engage French and German governesses for the early education of their children. So Vsevolod and his brother Boris had opportunity to become familiar with both languages from their early youth. Voline was able to speak and write French and German as fluently as his Russian mother tongue.

His first general education was received at the college in Voronezh. After he had finished his studies there he was sent to St. Petersburg to study jurisprudence. But all plans for preparation for his future life were interrupted by the critical situation which developed in Russia at that time. Voline became acquainted with revolutionary ideas as a student at the age of nineteen, and made himself notably useful in the labour movement from the year 1901.

In 1905, when the whole Russian Empire was under the spell of the great revolutionary upheaval which nearly overthrew the tyrannical Romanov rule, the young man from Voronezh joined the Social Revolutionary Party and took an active part in that uprising. And after the bloody suppression of the insurrection he, like so many thousands, was arrested. In 1907 a Tsarist tribunal's sentence banished him to one of the numerous places in Russia for political exiles. But he was lucky enough to find means of escape and went to France.



Voline (1882-1945)

It was in Paris that Voline found a larger opportunity to study and weigh the various schools of the Socialist movement and the many-sided aspects of the social problem in general. He became associated with various libertarians, among them Sebastian Faure, the eloquent orator of the French Anarchists. And he made connections with the small circle of Russian Anarchists in Paris, with A. A. Kareline and his group, and other organizations of Russian exiles. Under the influence of his new surroundings it was inevitable that Voline gradually altered his political and social views, with the result that in 1911 he separated himself from the Social-Revolutionaries and joined the Anarchist movement.

In 1913, when the danger of armed conflict cast a shadow over all Europe, he became a member of the Committee for International Action Against War. This activity nettled the French authorities, and in 1915, when the battle-lines were being extended on the Continent, the Viviani-Millerand Government decided to put him in a concentration camp for the duration of the fighting. Warned in time, he was able, with the help of some French comrades, to escape to Bordeaux. There he shipped out as a storekeeper on a freighter bound for the United States.

In New York, Voline joined the Union of Russian Workers in the United States and Canada, a formidable organization with about 10,000 members which entertained ideas similar to those of the *Conféderation Génerale du Travail* (the General Confederation of Labour) in France in that period. Thus he found a rich field for his activities. And soon he was serving on the editorial staff of *Golos Truda,* The Voice of Labour, weekly paper of the Federation, and as one of its most gifted lecturers.

But in 1917, when the Revolution broke out in Russia, the whole staff of *Golos Truda* decided to leave for that country and to transfer the periodical to Petrograd. Arriving there, they got ready co-operation from the lately organized Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda Union. So it was easy to make arrangements for the publication of *Golos Truda* on Russian soil. Voline joined that Union and was immediately elected as one of the editors. During the early months the paper appeared as a weekly, but after the events of October, 1917, it became a daily.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik Government in Moscow had signed the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk by which the whole Ukraine was

handed over to the German and Austrian occupation forces. For this reason Voline left Petrograd and joined a troop of libertarian partisans who went to Ukrainia to fight against the foreign invaders and their Russian supporters. Thus he found it possible to go to Bobrov and visit his family, which he had not seen since 1915, when he was compelled to leave France for America.

During ensuing months of comparative freedom in Russia, when other social movements beside the Bolsheviki still enjoyed opportunity to spread their ideas through their own publications and at public meetings, Voline was constantly busy in many fields. He took part in the work of the Soviet Department for Public Education and Enlightenment of the People, first in Voronezh and later in Kharkov. In autumn, 1918, he helped to build up the Anarchist Federation of the Ukraine, for a few months a potent organization, known by the name *Nabat* (Tocsin), which issued a great deal of literature. Besides its principal organ in Kursk, *Nabat* had regional papers under the same name in several parts of the Ukraine. Voline became a member of *Nabat's* Secretariat and of the editorial staff of its periodicals. And the Conference of that organization in Kursk entrusted him to work out a *Synthetical Declaration of Principles* which would be acceptable to all schools of libertarian Socialism in Russia and permit them to work together.

But all *Nabat's* plans for the future came to naught when in spring, 1919, the Soviet Government began to persecute the Anarchists by suppressing their papers and arresting their militants *en masse*. It was then that Voline joined the revolutionary army of Nestor Makhno. And Makhno had in that army also a special department to enlighten the people and prepare them for a new social order, based on common ownership of the land, home rule of communities, and federative solidarity. Voline soon became head of this department, and acted as such during the whole campaign against Denikin.

In December, 1919, the Military Revolutionary Council sent him to the district of Krivoi-Rog to oppose the dangerous propaganda of the agents of Hetman Petlura; but on his way he was stricken with typhoid fever and had to remain in the cottage of a peasant. Meanwhile Denikin's army was defeated, and shortly afterward there was a new break between the Soviet Government

and Makhno's partisans. Still exceedingly ill, Voline was arrested on January 14, by military agents of the Moscow Government and dragged from one prison to another. Trotsky already had ordered his execution, and according to Voline, he escaped death then only by sheer accident.

March, 1920, saw him taken to Moscow, and he was a prisoner there until October, when he and many other Anarchists were released by virtue of a treaty between the Soviet Union and Makhno's army. Voline then returned to Kharkov, resuming his old activities and participating in continuing negotiations between the Lenin Government and a delegation from Makhno's forces. But the agreement reached by these contending parties was quickly broken by the Bolsheviks, and in November, scarcely a month after their release, Voline and most of his comrades were arrested again and confined in the Taganka prison in Moscow.

There was nothing against them except their libertarian views. Yet there can hardly be any doubt that except for a sudden turn of circumstance they all would have been liquidated in one way or another like so many thousands later. It was by a mere coincidence that their lives were saved.

In the summer of 1921 the Red Trade Union International held a Congress in Moscow. The delegates included representatives of some Anarcho-Syndicalist organizations in Spain, France, and other countries, who had come to ascertain whether an alliance with this new International would be feasible or not. They arrived in the capital just as the Anarchists in the Taganka prison went on a hunger strike which lasted more than ten days and was carried on to compel the authorities to explain publicly why they had been jailed.

When those delegates heard what had been happening they voiced a vehement protest, demanding the liberation of their Russian comrades. But it was only after the affair became an open scandal in the Congress that the Government consented to release the hunger-strikers, on condition, however, that they leave Russia. It was the first time that political prisoners were deported from the vaunted Red Fatherland of the Proletariat.

And the Soviet Government had the audacity to furnish those victims with passports taken from Czechoslovakian war prisoners *en route* to their homeland. When the deportees arrived at the

German port of Stettin they gave the authorities their real names and pointed out that the passports given to them by the Bolsheviki actually were not theirs. Fortunately for them, Germany itself was then in the midst of a revolutionary situation, when many things could be done which were later impossible.

Though the commissar of the port had no legal right to let this group of about twenty remain on German soil, he sympathized with their plight and permitted them to send two of their comrades to Berlin to see whether they could find a friendly organization which would assume responsibility for their maintenance and good behaviour. When the two delegates appeared at our headquarters in Germany's capital, Fritz Kater, chairman of the *Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands,* went with them to the Chief of Police and signed all necessary documents, so that within a few hours they had permission to bring the whole group to Berlin. They arrived by the end of 1921.

It was not an easy job to provide for such a number, but the German comrades did what they could. Especially was it hard to find places for the newcomers to live in, for the housing question in Germany after the first World War was simply abominable and remained one of the nation's greatest problems for many years. And our toughest task was to discover a spot where the Voline family of seven could all be under the same roof. The only shelter our committee could find for them at that time was an attic which could be heated.

It was then that I first met Voline and his comrades. Although only forty-one, he looked much older, for his hair and beard were almost white. But his energetic gestures and quick movements quickly corrected my initial impression. He was a genial and intelligent man with mild manners, thoughtful and courteous, and almost immune to outer circumstances and personal hardship. Having an unusual faculty for concentration, he could go on with his writing, apparently without difficulty, in the same attic where his whole family had to sleep, eat, and carry on their daily lives.

In fact, Voline did a great deal of useful work while in Berlin. He wrote, in German, a valuable pamphlet of eighty pages, entitled *The Persecutions of the Anarchists in Soviet Russia.* This was the first authentic and documented information to the outer world

about what was then going on in Russia. He also translated Peter Arshinov's book, *The History of the Makhnovist Movement,*[1] into German, and at the same time edited a Russian Magazine, *The Anarchist Worker.* Besides, he did extensive work for the German libertarian movement, lecturing and writing articles for our press.

Voline remained in Berlin for about two years, then received an invitation from Sebastian Faure to settle with his family in Paris, where living conditions in those days were much better than in Germany. Faure was occupied with the preparation and publication of his *Encyclopédie Anarchiste* and needed a man who was familiar with foreign languages as a regular contributor. So Voline found a challenging and engrossing field for his further activity. He wrote various articles for the new Encyclopedia, many of which were also published as special pamphlets in several languages. Too, he accepted an invitation of the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (National Confederation of Labour) in Spain to become editor of its French periodical in Paris, *L'Espagne Anti-Fasciste.*

But although his economic fortunes in France were notably more favourable than they could have been in Germany, he suffered a succession of misfortunes, of which the death of his wife under harrowing circumstances was the worst. Shortly afterwards he left Paris for Nimes, and a little later arrived in Marseilles, where he was caught by the second World War. After the Nazis invaded France, his position became more and more dangerous. Going from one hiding place to another, he was compelled to live amid constant tragedy and in dire misery.

When the war ended he returned to Paris, but only to enter a hospital, for he was afflicted with incurable tuberculosis and knew that his days were numbered. There he died on September 18, 1945. Many of his old friends followed him on his last journey, which led to the crematorium in the old cemetery of Père-Lachaise. They mourned the loss of a dauntless comrade who had suffered much in his life, but who remained to the last a valiant fighter for a better world and the great cause of freedom and social justice.

RUDOLF ROCKER.

Crompond, N.Y.,
May, 1953.

[1] **Published by the Group of the Russian Anarchists in Germany, Berlin, 1923.**

INTRODUCTION
Some Essential Preliminary Notes

1. "Russian Revolution" can mean three things: either the entire revolutionary movement, from the revolt of the Decembrists (1825) until the present; or only the two consecutive uprisings of 1905 and 1917; or, finally, only the great explosion of 1917. In this work, "Russian Revolution" is used in the first sense, as the entire movement.

This is the only way the reader will be able to understand the development and totality of events as well as the present situation in the U.S.S.R.

2. A relatively complete history of the Russian Revolution would require more than one volume. This would have to be a long-term project carried out by future historians. Here we are concerned with a more limited project whose aims are: (a) to provide understanding of the entirety of the movement; (b) to underline its essential elements, which are largely unknown abroad; (c) to make possible certain evaluations and conclusions.

As the work progresses, it becomes increasingly broad and detailed. It is mainly in the sections dealing with the upheavals of 1905 and 1917 that the reader will find numerous details which have until now been unknown, as well as a large number of previously unpublished documents.

3. One problem should be constantly kept in mind: the difference between the general development of Russia and that of Western Europe. In fact, an account of the Russian Revolution should be preceded by a complete historical study of the country, or better yet, should be inserted into such a study. But such a task would be far beyond the limits of our subject. To remedy this situation, we will give the reader historical information whenever this seems necessary.

PREFACE

EVERY REVOLUTION—even when studied closely by many authors of various tendencies, and at different times—long remains, fundamentally, a great Unknown. Centuries pass, and from time to time, men turn up new facts and unpublished documents among the remains of old uprisings. These discoveries upset our knowledge and ideas which we had supposed to be complete. How many works about the French Revolution of 1789 already existed when Kropotkin and Jaures unearthed from the ruins elements unknown until then, which threw unexpected light on that period? And didn't Jaures say that the vast archives of the Great Revolution were hardly tapped?

Generally, it is not known how to study a revolution, just as it is still not known how to write the history of a people. Moreover, authors, even when experienced and conscientious, commit errors and negligences which prevent the reader from getting a clear understanding of their theme. They take the trouble, for instance, to examine meticulously and explain in detail the striking facts and phenomena, those which unfold in the light of day, in the burning "revolutionary furnace". But they mistrust and ignore those developments which occur silently, in the depths of the revolution, outside the "furnace". Or, at best, they accord them a few words in passing, basing their comment on vague testimonies, with interpretations which are frequently erroneous or biased. And it is precisely these hidden facts which are important, and which throw a true light on the events under consideration and on the period.

Too, the scientific keys to the phenomena of revolution—economics, sociology, psychology—are at present incapable, by reason of their rudimentary state, of explaining adequately what has happened.

And this is not all. Even from the point of view of pure "reportage", how many gaps there are. In the terrible whirlwind of revolution, a multitude of facts, engulfed by crevices which open and shut at every instant, remain undiscovered, perhaps forever. Those who live through a revolution, those millions

of men who, in one way or another, are carried away by the storm, are, alas, very little concerned with noting down, for future generations, what they saw, thought, or experienced.

Finally, there exists still another reason, which I particularly want to emphasize. With very few exceptions, the rare witnesses who leave notes, and also the historians, are disgustingly partial. Each one deliberately seeks and finds, in a revolution, the elements which will support a personal thesis, or will be useful to a dogma, a party, or a caste. Each one carefully hides and discards all that might contradict his own theory. The revolutionaries themselves, divided by their theories, try to dissimulate or distort whatever does not agree with such and such a doctrine.

We of course are not speaking of the disconcerting number of books which simply are not serious.

In the last analysis, who then can seek to establish the real and only truth? No one—or practically no one. And it is not astonishing that there exists, on the subject of a revolution, nearly as many versions as volumes, and that the fundamental truth of the real revolution remains unknown.

However, it is this hidden revolution which carries within it the seeds of future upheavals. Whoever wants to live meaningfully, or who wants to understand events clearly, must discover and scrutinize this Unknown. And the duty of the author is to help the seeker in his task.

In the present work this unknown revolution is the Russian Revolution, not the one which has been treated many times by politicians and bought-and-paid writers, but the one that has been either neglected or adroitly hidden, or even falsified by such people.

Leaf through a few books on the Revolution in Russia. Until now nearly all have been written by more or less biased individuals, and from a doctrinal, political, or even personal point of view. According to whether the writer is a White or a Red, a Democrat, a Socialist, a Stalinist, or a Trotskyite, everything differs in appearance. The reality itself is adapted to the design of the narrator. The more you seek to establish it, the less you succeed. For authors [of histories of Russia in 1917] have all too often passed over in silence facts of the highest importance, if they did not conform to their own ideas, did not interest them, or were inconvenient.

A fundamental problem has been bequeathed to us by the revolutions of 1789 and 1917. Opposed to a large extent to

oppression, animated by a powerful breath of liberty, and proclaiming liberty as their essential purpose, why did these revolutions go down under a new dictatorship, exercised by a new dominating and privileged group, in a new slavery for the mass of the people involved? What will be the conditions which will permit a revolution to avoid this sad end? Will this end, for a long time still, be a sort of historical inevitability, or is it due to passing factors, or simply to errors and faults that can be avoided from now on? And in the latter case, what will be the means of eliminating the danger which already threatens the revolutions to come? Is it permissible to hope to avert or surmount it?

In the opinion of the author, it is precisely the elements that are unknown—or that have been deliberately dissimulated—which offer us the key to the problem before us and supply material indispensable to its solution. And this volume is an attempt to clarify that problem with the help of incontestable facts.

The author actively participated in the Russian Revolution of 1917, as well as in that of 1905. And he wants to examine, with complete objectivity, the available authentic facts [about the overturn in 1917]. Such is his only concern. If he did not have it, he never would have bothered to write the pages which follow.

This concern for a frank exposition and an impartial analysis of that revolution is favoured by the author's ideological position. Since 1908 he has not belonged to any political party. By personal conviction, however, he sympathizes with the libertarian idea. So he can permit himself the luxury of being objective, for, as an Anarchist, he has no interest in betraying the truth, no reason to deceive. He is not interested in power, nor in a high position, nor in privilege, nor in the triumph, "at any cost", of a doctrine. He seeks only to establish the truth, for only the truth is fertile. His passion, his only ambition, is to explain the events of 1917 in the light of exact facts, for only such an explanation permits one to formulate correct and useful conclusions.

Like all revolutions, the Russian Revolution involved a wealth of unknown and even unsuspected facts.

The present study is offered in the hope that some day it will take its modest place beside the works of authors who have wished, been able, and known how, to explore those great riches, honestly, and in complete independence.

BOOK ONE

BIRTH, GROWTH AND TRIUMPH OF THE REVOLUTION

PART I

THE FIRST FRUITS (1825–1905)

CHAPTER 1

Russia at the Beginning of the 19th Century; Birth of the Revolution

The enormous size of the country, a sparse population whose disunity makes it an easy prey for invaders, Mongol domination for more than two centuries, continual wars, varied catastrophes and other unfavorable factors caused the enormous political, economic, social and cultural backwardness of Russia in relation to other European countries.

Politically, Russia entered the 19th century under the rule of an absolute monarchy (the autocratic "Tsar") which was dependent on an enormous landed and military aristocracy, an omnipotent bureaucracy, an extensive and pious clergy, and a peasant mass consisting of 75,000,000 souls—primitive, illiterate and prostrate before their "little father," the Tsar.

Economically, the country had reached the stage of a type of agrarian feudalism. Except for the two capitals (St. Petersburg and Moscow) and some cities in the South, the cities were hardly developed. Commerce and particularly industry stagnated. The economic base of the country was agriculture which supported 95% of the population. The land did not belong to the direct producers, the peasants, but was the property of the State or of large landed proprietors, the "pomeshchiks." The peasants, legally tied to the land and to the property-owner, were his *serfs.* The largest proprietors owned veritable fiefs, inherited from their ancestors who, in turn, had received them from the sovereign, the first proprietor, in exchange for services rendered (military, administrative or other). The "lord" determined the life and death of his serfs. He not only made them work as slaves; he could also sell them, punish them and make martyrs out of them (he could kill them without much inconvenience to himself). This serfdom, this slavery on the part of 75,000,000 people, was the economic foundation of the State.

It is hardly possible to talk of the *social organization* of such a "society." On top were the absolute masters: the Tsar, his numerous relatives, his slavish court, the high nobility, the military caste, the high clergy. On the bottom, the slaves: peasant-serfs in the countryside and the lower class people of the cities, who lacked all notions of civic life, all rights, all freedoms. Between the two, there were certain intermediate strata: merchants, bureaucrats, functionaries, artisans and others—colorless and insignificant.

It is clear that the cultural level of the society was not very high. Nevertheless, already for this period we have to make an *important reservation:* a striking contrast which we will again describe later, existed between the uneducated and poverty-stricken population of the cities and villages and the privileged strata whose education and training were quite advanced.

The serfdom of the masses was the plague of the country. A few noble-spirited individuals had already protested against this abomination toward the end of the 18th century. They had to pay dearly for their generous gesture. On the other hand, the peasants rebelled with increasing frequency against their masters. Besides local uprisings of a more or less individual nature (against one or another lord who went too far), the peasant masses gave rise to two extensive movements (the Razin uprising in the 17th and the Pugachev uprising in the 18th century) which, though they failed, created enormous problems for the Tsarist government and nearly overthrew the entire system. It should be noted, however, that these two spontaneous movements were directed mainly against the immediate enemy: the landed nobility, the urban aristocracy and the corrupt administration. No general idea of overthrowing the social system in its entirety and replacing it with another and more equitable system was formulated. By using treachery and violence, with the help of the clergy and other reactionary elements, the government succeeded in totally subjugating the peasants, even "psychologically," to such an extent that any movement of widespread revolt was rendered nearly impossible for a long period of time.

The first consciously revolutionary movement directed against the regime appeared in 1825 when, after the death of

Alexander I, who left no direct heir, the crown, rejected by his brother Constantine, passed to his other brother Nicholas. Socially, the program of this movement aimed for the abolition of serfdom; politically, for the establishment of a republic or at least a constitutional regime.

This movement emerged, not from among the oppressed, but from the privileged classes. The conspirators, taking advantage of the government's preoccupation with dynastic problems, began to carry out the projects they had long been preparing. In the revolt which broke out in St. Petersburg, they were supported by some of the regiments in the capital. (At the head of the movement there were some officers of the imperial army.) The rebellion was defeated after a short battle at the Senate Square between the insurgents and the troops which remained loyal to the government. Several uprisings which had been planned in the provinces were nipped in the bud.

The revolt made a profound impression on the new Tsar, Nicholas I, and he personally supervised an extremely thorough investigation. The investigators sought and ferreted out even the most distant and platonic sympathizers of the movement. The repression, in its desire to be definitive and "exemplary," did not stop short of cruelty. The five principal instigators died on the scaffold; hundreds were imprisoned, exiled or condemned to hard labor.

Since the revolt took place in December, the participants came to be known as Decembrists. Nearly all belonged to the nobility or to other privileged classes. Nearly all had received professional training or higher education. Open-minded and sensitive, they were pained by the sight of a people weighed down by an arbitrary and unjust regime, by ignorance, poverty, and slavery. They took up the protests of their 18th century predecessors and translated them into action. What gave them the necessary impetus was largely the journey many of them had taken to France after the war of 1812, which made it possible for them to compare the relatively high level of civilization in Europe with the barbaric living conditions of the Russian population. They returned to Russia having made the firm decision to struggle against the backward political and social system which oppressed their countrymen. They

rallied many educated individuals to their cause. Pestel, one of the leaders of the movement, even elaborated some vaguely socialist ideas in his program. The famous poet Pushkin (born in 1799) sympathized with the movement, although he did not join it.

As soon as the revolt was put down, the frightened new emperor, Nicholas I, pushed the despotic, bureaucratic and police rule of the Russian State to its extreme.

It should be emphasized that there was no contradiction between the peasants' revolts against their oppressors on the one hand, and their blind veneration of the "little father the Tsar" on the other. The peasant revolts, as we said earlier, were always directed against the *immediate* oppressors: the landowners ("pomeshchiks"), the nobles, the functionaries, the police. It did not occur to the peasants to look for the source of the oppression further, in the Tsarist regime itself, personified by the Tsar, grand protector of the nobles and the privileged, first and most highly privileged nobleman. To the peasants the Tsar was a type of idol, a superior being high above ordinary mortals, above their small interests and weaknesses, guiding the great destinies of the state. The authorities, the bureaucrats, and above all the priests (the "popes") did all they could to engrave this idea in the peasants' heads. The peasants finally accepted the legend, and later it became unshakeable. The Tsar, they told themselves, wants nothing but the well-being of his "children"; but the privileged intermediaries, interested in preserving their rights and advantages, stand between the Tsar and his people and keep him from knowing their misery. (The peasant masses were convinced that if the people and the Tsar could face each other directly, the Tsar, temporarily misled by the privileged, would see the truth, would get rid of his bad advisors and other dishonest people, and would deal with the sufferings of the tillers of the soil; he would free them from their yoke and would give to them all of the good land which by rights ought to belong to those who work it.) Thus, while sometimes revolting against their most cruel masters, the peasants waited with hope and resignation for the day when the wall separating them from the Tsar would be demolished and

social justice would be re-established by the Tsar. Their religious mysticism helped them accept the period of waiting and suffering as a punishment and trial imposed by God. They resigned themselves to it with a primitive fatalism.

This outlook was extremely characteristic of the Russian peasant masses. It became even more pronounced during the nineteenth century, in spite of growing discontent and increasingly frequent individual or local acts of revolt. *The peasants were losing patience. But the more impatient they became, the more fervently they waited for their "liberator," the Tsar.*

This "legend of the Tsar" was a central characteristic of popular Russian life in the nineteenth century. Failure to take it into account will make it impossible to understand the events that follow. This legend clarifies certain phenomena which would otherwise be unexplainable. It goes a long way toward explaining the Russian paradox which we have already mentioned, a paradox which shocked so many Europeans, and which did not disappear until the outbreak of the 1917 revolution: on the one side are numerous individuals who are cultured, educated, advanced, who want to see their people free and happy, who are aware of the ideas of their time, and who struggle for the emancipation of the working classes, for democracy and socialism. On the other side are people who do nothing for their liberation (aside from a few minor and unimportant revolts), people who remain obstinately prostrate before their idol and their dream, people who do not even understand the gesture of one who sacrifices himself for them. Indifferent, blind to truth, deaf to all appeals, these people wait for the liberator Tsar just as the first Christians waited for the Messiah.[1]

[1]There are analogies between this situation in 19th century Russia before the revolution of 1917, and that of France in the eighteenth century before the revolution of 1789. But naturally certain peculiarities are specifically Russian.

CHAPTER 2

Repression, Violence and Failure; Development Continues (1825-1855)

The reign of Nicholas I lasted from 1825 to 1855. From a revolutionary point of view nothing striking characterizes these years. This thirty year period is nevertheless notable in several important respects.

Having ascended to the throne in the shadow of the Decembrist revolt, Nicholas I undertook to hold the country in an iron vice so as to squelch in the bud any expression of liberalism. He strengthened absolute rule to the limit and succeeded in transforming Russia into a bureaucratic and repressive state.

The French revolution and the revolutionary movements which subsequently shook Europe were nightmares for him. He undertook extraordinary precautionary measures.

The entire population was closely watched. The arbitrariness of the bureaucracy, the police and the courts no longer had any limits. Any expression of independence, any attempt to elude the iron fist of the police was ruthlessly repressed.

Naturally there was not even a shadow of freedom of speech, assembly, or association.

Censorship thrived as never before.

All infractions of the "laws" were punished with the utmost severity.

The Polish uprising of 1831 (drowned in blood with a rare ferocity), as well as the international situation, led the emperor to further accentuate the militarization of the country. People's lives were regulated as in barracks and severe punishment fell on anyone who tried to avoid the imposed discipline.

This sovereign well deserved the name: *Nicholas the Fierce.*

In spite of all the measures—or rather because of them and their nefarious effects, which the Tsar in his blindness did not take into account—the country (namely certain sections of the population) expressed its discontent at every opportunity.

The landed nobles, pampered by the emperor who considered them his main support, exploited the serfs with impunity and treated them abominably. The peasants became perceptibly irritated. Acts of rebellion against the "*pomeshchiks*" (lords) and against the local authorities reached alarming proportions. Repressive measures began to lose their effectiveness.

The corruption, incompetence, and caprice of the functionaries grew increasingly unbearable. Since the Tsar needed the support and the violence of the functionaries to "keep the people in line," he would hear nothing and see nothing. The anger of those who suffered from this state of affairs only grew more intense.

The vital forces of the society did not stir. Only the official routine, absurd and impotent, was allowed.

This situation was unavoidably leading toward the future decomposition of the entire system. Powerful only in appearance, the "regime of the knout" was rotten inside. The immense empire was already becoming a "giant with clay feet."

Growing sections of the population were becoming aware of this state of affairs.

The spirit of opposition against this impossible system was infecting the entire society.

It was in these circumstances that the magnificent evolution—both rapid and important—of the young intellectual stratum began.

In a country as large and prolific as Russia, youth were numerous among all classes of the population. What was their general outlook?

Leaving aside the peasant youth, we can observe that the more or less educated younger generations professed advanced ideas. Mid-nineteenth century youth did not readily accept the slavery of the peasants. Tsarist absolutism shocked them. The study of the Western world, which no amount of

censorship could prevent (on the contrary, the censorship gave rise to a taste for forbidden fruit), stimulated their imaginations. The rise of the natural sciences and of materialism made a strong impression on them. It was during this same period that Russian literature, taking its inspiration from humanist principles, flowered and exerted a powerful influence on youth, in spite of the censorship, which it successfully circumvented.

At the same time, economically, the labor of the serfs and the absence of all freedoms no longer responded to the pressing needs of the time.

For all these reasons, intellectuals, particularly the youth, were theoretically emancipated toward the end of the reign of Nicholas I. The intellectuals were resolutely opposed to serfdom and absolutism.

It was during this period that the well-known *nihilist* current was born, as well as a sharp conflict between conservative "fathers" and fiercely progressive "sons," a conflict superbly depicted by Turgenev in his novel, *Fathers and Sons.*

Outside of Russia a widespread and deeply rooted misunderstanding accompanies the word "nihilism," which originated some 75 years ago in Russian literature and which, due to its Latin origin, passed into other languages without being translated.

In France and elsewhere, "nihilism" is generally understood as a revolutionary *political* and *social* doctrine, invented in Russia where it has or had numerous organized adherents. People still speak of a "nihilist party" and of its members, the "nihilists." None of this is exact.

The term "nihilism" was introduced into literature and subsequently into the Russian language by the celebrated novelist Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) in the middle of the nineteenth century. In one of his novels Turgenev used this word to describe a current of ideas—*and not a doctrine*—which appeared among young Russian intellectuals at the end of 1850. The term caught on and quickly became part of the language.

This current of ideas had an essentially philosophic and largely moral character. Its field of influence was always

limited since it never went beyond the intellectual stratum. Its standpoint was always *personal* and *pacifist,* which did not keep it from being animated by a generous spirit of revolt and guided by the dream of happiness for all humanity.

The movement which was set off by this current (if one can speak of a movement) did not go beyond the domains of literature and customs *(moeurs).* Any other type of movement would have been impossible under the regime of the time. However, in these two domains it did not hesitate to draw the logical conclusions which it not only formulated but also sought to apply individually as rules of conduct.

Within these limits, the movement paved the way for an intellectual and moral development which led Russian youth toward some very broad and progressive conceptions. One result was the emancipation of educated women, an achievement of which late nineteenth-century Russia could justly be proud.

In spite of its strictly philosophical and individual character, this intellectual current, due to its humanistic and liberating spirit, carried the germ of later social conceptions which gave rise to a real revolutionary movement that was both political as well as social. *"Nihilism" prepared the ground* for this movement, which appeared later under the stimulus of European ideas as well as internal and external events.

Outside of Russia, the "nihilist" current is generally confused with the later movement which was led by *parties* or *organized* groups with a program of action and *concrete* goals. But it is only to the current of ideas which was a *precursor* of this movement that the term *"nihilist"* should be applied.

As a philosophical conception, nihilism was based on *materialism* and *individualism,* understood in their broadest, even exaggerated, sense.

Force and Matter, the famous work of Buchner (German materialist philosopher, 1824-1899), was translated into Russian, clandestinely lithographed, and thousands of copies were distributed despite the risks. This book became the Bible of Russian intellectual youth of the time. The works of Moleschott, Charles Darwin and several materialist and naturalist authors also exerted a great influence.

Materialism was accepted as an unquestionable absolute truth.

As *materialists,* the nihilists engaged in an unrelenting war against religion and against everything which escapes pure reason or positive proof, against everything which is beyond material reality or beyond values with no practical use—in short, against everything which is spiritual, sentimental or idealistic.

They scorned esthetics, beauty, comfort, spiritual enjoyment, sentimental love, fashion, the desire to please. They went so far as to completely reject art as a manifestation of idealism. Their great ideologist, the brilliant publicist Pisarev, who died in an accident when he was young, formulated (in one of his articles) his famous parallel between a worker and an artist. Pisarev held that any cobbler was infinitely more admirable than Raphael, since the first produces useful material objects while the paintings of the second serve no purpose. In his writings, Pisarev fervently applied materialistic and utilitarian principles to dethrone the great poet Pushkin. The nihilist Bazarov in Turgenev's novel, says, "Nature is not a temple but a laboratory, and man is there to work."

When speaking of the "unrelenting war" waged by the nihilists, one must understand a literary and verbal war, and no more. Nihilism's activity was limited to a veiled propaganda of its ideas in journals and among intellectuals. It was not easy to spread this propaganda since it was necessary to take into account the censorship as well as the Tsarist police, which suppressed "foreign heresies" and all independent thought. The "external" manifestations of nihilism consisted mainly of dressing very plainly and behaving uninhibitedly. For example, nihilist women generally had short hair, often wore glasses to make themselves ugly and emphasize their contempt for beauty and stylishness, dressed in coarse clothing to defy fashion, walked like men and smoked in order to proclaim the equality of the sexes and demonstrate their contempt for the rules of convention. These extravagances did not in any way diminish the seriousness of the movement. The impossibility of any other type of "exteriorization" explained and, in large measure, justified them. In the realm of personal morality, the nihilists practiced an absolute rigorism.

But the main principle of nihilism was a form of *specific individualism.*

Originally a very natural reaction against everything which the Russia of that period suppressed, this individualism ended up by denouncing, in the name of absolute individual freedom, all constraints, obligations and obstacles, and all the traditions imposed on man by society; the family, customs, morals, beliefs, established conventions.

The complete emancipation of the individual, whether man or woman, from everything which might infringe on his independence or his freedom of thought: this was the basic idea of nihilism. It defended the sacred right of the individual to total liberty and to the inviolability of his life.

The reader can understand why this current of ideas is called *nihilism.* This term was used to describe the partisans of an ideology which accepted *nothing* (in Latin, *nihil)* of that which was natural and sacred for others: family, society, religion, traditions. When one asked such a person, "What do you admit, what do you approve in the environment which surrounds you and which claims to have the right and even the duty to control you?" he answered: *"Nothing!" (Nihil).* He was a nihilist.

In spite of its essentially indivualistic and philosophical character (it defended the freedom of the individual in an abstract manner rather than against the ruling despotism), nihilism *prepared the ground for the concrete struggle against the real and immediate obstacle,* for concrete political, economic and social liberation.

But it did not itself undertake this struggle. It did not even ask the question: "What can be done to actually liberate the individual?" To the very end it stayed in the realm of purely ideological discussions and purely moral achievements. The other question, the question of direct action for liberation, was posed by the next generation, during the period between 1870 and 1880. It was then that the first revolutionary and socialist groups were formed in Russia. *Action* began. But it no longer had anything in common with the "nihilism" of former days. Even the word was discarded. It remained in the Russian language as a purely historical term, a relic and souvenir of the intellectual movement of 1860-1870.

The fact that abroad people erroneously use the term "nihilism" to refer to the entire Russian revolutionary movement before "Bolshevism" and speak of a "nihilist party," is due to lack of knowledge of the real history of the revolutionary movements in Russia.

The outrageously reactionary government of Nicholas I refused to recognize either the real situation or the intellectual ferment. Instead, it defied society by creating a secret political police (the well-known *Okhrana:* "Security") and special corps of police to destroy the movement.

Political persecutions became a true scourge. We might remember that during this period the young Dostoyevsky was almost executed, and was imprisoned for belonging to a completely harmless study group inspired by Petraschevsky; that the first great Russian critic and publicist, Belinsky, barely succeeded in making himself heard; that another great publicist, Herzen, was forced to become an expatriate; not to mention accomplished and active revolutionaries like Bakunin.

All of this repression did not succeed in calming the agitation, the causes of which were too deeply-rooted. It succeeded even less in improving the situation. The Tsar's remedy was to strengthen the repressive and bureaucratic apparatus still more.

Concurrently, Russia was drawn into the Crimean War (1854-1855). This was a catastrophe. The vicissitudes of the war factually demonstrated the bankruptcy of the regime and the real weakness of the Empire. The "clay feet" gave way for the first time. (Naturally the lesson served no important purpose.) The State's political and social sores were exposed.

Nicholas I, defeated, died in 1855 as soon as the war was lost. Perfectly aware of the bankruptcy but unable to face up to it, he probably died of the moral shock. Some even insisted that he committed suicide by poisoning himself. This interpretation is highly plausible but there is no proof.

We must insist on a little known fact to help the reader understand what follows.

In spite of all the weaknesses and obstacles, during this

period, the country made considerable cultural and technical progress.

Driven by inescapable economic necessities, "national" industry was born, simultaneously giving birth to a working class, a "proletariat." Large factories were established in several cities. Harbors were opened. Coal, iron and gold mines began to operate. Transportation networks were enlarged and improved. The first express railway was constructed, connecting St. Petersburg (Leningrad) and Moscow, the two capitals of this immense country. This railway is an engineering marvel, since the region between these two cities is unsuited for this type of construction; the land is not firm and frequently consists of swamps and marshes. The distance between St. Petersburg and Moscow is about 600 versts (400 miles). From the standpoint of an economically rational construction, there could be no question of a straight route. It is said that Nicholas I, who took a personal interest in the project (the state was doing the construction), ordered various engineers to draw up and present blueprints with estimates. These engineers, taking advantage of the situation, presented the Emperor with projected routes which were extremely complicated, entailing numerous switchbacks, etc. Nicholas understood. Glancing briefly at the blueprints, he pushed them aside, took a pencil and piece of paper, drew two points, connected them with a straight line and said, "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line." It was a formal order, without appeal. The engineers had only to carry it out, which they did, thus accomplishing a genuine feat. It was a gargantuan task, accomplished at an unbelievable cost, causing devastating hardship for thousands of workers.

From its completion, the "Nicholayevskaya" (Nicholas's) railway has been one of the world's most remarkable railways: there are exactly 609 versts (405 miles) of track in an almost perfect straight line.

We should note that the emergent working class continued to retain close ties with the countryside from which it came and to which it returned as soon as the "outside" work was finished. Furthermore, as we have seen, the peasants, attached to the land of their lords, could not leave it permanently. Before they could be employed in industrial projects,

special arrangements had to be made with their landowners. The real workers of the cities—at this time itinerant craftsmen—were a very small contingent. Thus we are not yet dealing with a "proletariat" in the proper sense of the term. But the impetus for the creation of such a proletariat was already there. The need for reliable and regular laborers was one of the pressing economic reasons which demanded the abolition of serfdom. Two or three generations hence the class of wage laborers, the real industrial proletariat, no longer tied to the land, was going to appear in Russia, as it had elsewhere.

There were also great advances in the cultural realm. Well-to-do parents wanted their children to be educated and cultured. The rapidly growing number of high school and college students forced the government to continually increase the number of secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Economic and technical needs, as well as the general development of the country, also demanded educational establishments. At the end of Nicholas's reign, Russia had six universities: in Moscow, Dorpat, Kharkov, Kazan, St. Petersburg and Kiev (listed in the order of the dates of their founding) as well as several schools for advanced technical or special studies.

Thus the widespread legend that all of Russia at this time was uneducated, barbarian, almost "savage," is false. The peasant population under serfdom was indeed uneducated and "savage." But the inhabitants of the cities had no reason to envy the cultural achievements of their western counterparts, except in some purely technical realms. As for the intellectual youth, they were, in some respects, even more advanced than the youth of other European countries.

This enormous, paradoxical gap between the mentality of the enslaved population and the cultural level of the privileged strata has already been mentioned earlier.

CHAPTER 3

Reforms; Resumption of the Revolution "The Failure of Tsarism" and the Failure of Revolution; Reaction (1855-1881)

It was the son and successor of Nicholas I, Emperor Alexander II, who had to face the difficult situation of the country and the regime. General discontent, pressure from the progressive intellectual strata, fear of an uprising by the peasant masses, and finally the economic necessities of the period, forced the Tsar to give in and embark resolutely on a path of reform, despite the bitter resistance of reactionary circles. He decided to put an end to the purely bureaucratic system and to the absolute arbitrariness of administrative officers, and instituted far-reaching changes in the judicial system. Above all, he confronted the problem of serfdom.

From 1860 on, reforms followed each other in rapid and uninterrupted succession. The most important were: the abolition of serfdom (1861); the establishment of assize courts with elected juries (1864) which replaced the earlier State courts composed of functionaries; the creation (in 1864) of units of local self-administration in the cities and in the countryside (the *gorodskoe samoupralenie* and the *zemstvo:* forms of urban and rural municipalities), with the right of self-government in certain domains of public life (some branches of education, health, transportation, etc.).

All the vital forces of the population, particularly the intellectuals, turned toward the projects which were now possible. The municipalities devoted themselves enthusiastically to the creation of a vast network of primary schools with secular leanings. These "municipal" and "urban" schools were obviously under the surveillance and control of the government. Religious instruction was obligatory and the "pope" played an important role. The schools nevertheless enjoyed a

certain amount of autonomy, the teaching staff being recruited by the "zemstvos" and the urban councils from among progressive intellectuals.

A great deal of attention was also devoted to sanitary conditions in the cities and to the improvement of transportation.

The country breathed more freely.

However, in spite of their importance in relation to the earlier situation, the reforms of Alexander II were very timid and incomplete in relation to the aspirations of the advanced strata and to the material and moral needs of the country. To be effective, to give the people a real impetus, the reforms would have to be accompanied by the granting of certain freedoms and civic rights: the freedom of speech and of the press, the right of assembly and association, etc. In this area, however, nothing changed. Censorship was scarcely less ridiculous. Speech and the press remained muzzled; no freedoms were granted. The emerging working class had no rights. The nobility, the landowners and the bourgeoisie were the dominant classes. Above all, *the absolutist regime remained intact.* (It was precisely the fear of changing the regime that led Alexander to throw the bone of "reform" to the people, while preventing him from carrying these reforms through to the end. Thus the reforms failed to satisfy the population.)

The conditions in which serfdom was abolished provide the best illustration of what we are saying. This constitutes the weakest point of the reforms.

The landowners, after struggling in vain against any change in the status quo, had to bend before the supreme decision of the Tsar (who reached this decision after long and dramatic vacillations under the energetic pressure of progressive elements). But the landlords did everything they could to make this reform minimal. It was all the easier for them to do this since Alexander II himself naturally did not want to infringe upon the sacred interests of his "beloved nobles." It was primarily the fear of revolution which finally dictated his gesture. He knew that the peasants had heard of his intentions and of the disagreements which surrounded this subject at court. He knew that this time their patience was really at an end, that they expected their liberation, and

that if they learned of the postponement of the reform, the agitation which would follow could provoke a vast and terrible revolt. In his last discussions with the opponents of the reform, the Tsar expressed this well-known sentence which says a great deal about his real feelings: "It is better to give freedom from above than to wait until it is taken from below." Therefore he did everything he could to make this "freedom," namely the abolition of serfdom, as harmless as possible to the interests of the landed nobles. "The iron chain has broken at last," wrote the poet Nekrasov in a resounding poem. "Yes, it broke; one end hit the lord, but the other, the peasant."

To be sure, the peasants finally obtained individual freedom. But they had to pay for it dearly. They received miniscule plots of land. (It was obviously impossible to "free" them without granting them plots of land which were at least large enough to keep them from dying of hunger.) Furthermore, in addition to having to pay taxes to the State over a long period, they were required to pay a large fee for the lands taken from the former landowners. It should be noted that 75 million peasants received little more than a third of the land. Another third was retained by the State. And almost a third remained in the hands of the landowners. This proportion condemned the peasant masses to a life of famine. They remained at the mercy of the "pomeshchiks" and, later, of the "kulaks," peasants who had, in one way or another, become rich.

In all his "reforms," Alexander II was careful to grant as little as possible: only the minimum necessary to avoid an imminent catastrophe. Thus the defects and the shortcomings of these "reforms" could already be felt by 1870.

The working population of the cities was defenseless against the growing exploitation.

The absence of any freedom of speech and of the press, as well as the absolute prohibition of all meetings with political or social content, rendered impossible all criticism, all propaganda, all social activity, the circulation of all ideas, in short, all progress.

The "people" were no more than "subjects" under the arbitrary power of absolutism which, while less ferocious than

under Nicholas I, nevertheless remained intact.

As for the peasant masses, they remained beasts of burden reduced to the hard labor of feeding the State and the privileged classes.

The best representatives of the young intellectuals quickly became aware of this deplorable situation. They were all the more distressed because in this period countries in the West already had relatively advanced political and social systems. Around 1870, Western Europe was in the midst of social struggles; socialism had started its intense propaganda and Marxism had begun the task of organizing the working class into a powerful political party.

As before, the best publicists of the period continued to defy and circumvent the censors, who were neither well enough educated nor intelligent enough to understand the finesse and variety of the procedures (although Chernyshevski ultimately paid for his audacity by forced labor). The publicists succeeded in communicating socialist ideas to intellectual circles through magazine articles written in conventional styles. In this way they educated the youth, keeping them regularly informed of the movement of ideas as well as the political and social events abroad. At the same time they skillfully exposed the underside of the so-called reforms of Alexander II, their real motives, their hypocrisy, and their shortcomings.

Thus it is altogether natural that clandestine groups formed in Russia during this period, in order to struggle actively against this contemptible regime, and above all to communicate the idea of political and social liberation of the working classes.

These groups were composed of youth of both sexes who consecrated themselves, with a sublime spirit of sacrifice, to the task of "bringing the light to the working masses."

Thus was formed a vast movement of Russian intellectual youth who, in large numbers, left families, comforts and careers and threw themselves "toward the people" in order to enlighten them.

At the same time, terrorist activities against the main servants of the regime began. Between 1860 and 1870 there were

several assassination attempts on the lives of several high government officials. There were also some unsuccessful attempts against the Tsar.

The movement ended in failure. Almost all the propagandists were arrested by the police (frequently on the basis of denunciations by the peasants themselves); they were imprisoned, exiled or sent to hard labor.[1] The practical results of the movement were nil.

It became increasingly evident that Tsarism represented an *insurmountable* obstacle to the education of the people. It was necessary to go only one step further to reach the logical conclusion that, since Tsarism represents such an obstacle, it must be destroyed.

And this step was in fact taken by tattered and desperate youth whose primary goal was the assassination of the Tsar. Other factors also led to this decision. The man who had deceived the people with his so-called "reforms" had to be publicly punished. The deception had to be exposed before the vast masses; their attention had to be attracted by a dramatic and terrible act. In short, the elimination of the Tsar was to show the people the fragility, the vulnerability and the fortuitous and temporary character of the regime.

The "legend of the Tsar" was thus to be killed once and for all. Some members of the group went further: they held that the assassination of the Tsar could serve as a point of departure which, in the context of the general development, would end in revolution and the immediate fall of Tsarism.

The group, which called itself *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will), after detailed preparations, executed the project: Tsar Alexander II was killed while traveling in St. Petersburg on March 1, 1881. Two bombs were thrown by terrorists at the imperial carriage. The first destroyed the carriage, the second mortally wounded the Emperor, removing both of his legs. He died almost immediately.

The act was not understood by the masses. The peasants did not read the journals. (They could not read at all.) Completely ignored, outsiders to all propaganda, fascinated for

[1] The famous and monstrous trial of "the 193" was the climax of this repression.

over a century by the idea that the Tsar wished them well but that his good intentions were thwarted by the nobility, the peasants accused the nobility of assassinating the Tsar to revenge itself for the abolition of serfdom and with the hope of restoring it. (The peasants found further proof for this in the nobility's resistance to their liberation and also in the compulsory payment of large fees for their plots of land, for which they blamed the intrigues of the nobility.)

The Tsar was killed. But not the legend. (The reader will see that twenty-four years later history itself destroyed the legend.)

The people did not understand and did not move. The servile press screamed about the "low criminals," the "horrible villains," the "imbeciles."

There was not much disorder at the court. The young heir Alexander, oldest son of the assassinated Emperor, immediately took power.

The leaders of the *Narodnaya Volya* party, those who organized and carried out the assassination, were rapidly found, arrested, tried and killed. One of them, the young Grinevetski —the very one who had thrown the bomb that killed the Tsar—had himself been mortally wounded by the explosion and died on the spot. Sofya Perovskaya, Zheliabov, Kibalchich (the famous technician of the party, who made the bombs), Mikhailov and Ryssakov were hung.

Exceptionally extensive and severe measures of persecution and repression quickly reduced the party to complete impotence.

Everything "returned to order."

The new Emperor, Alexander III, greatly affected by the assassination, found nothing better to do than to return to the recently abandoned path of complete reaction. The totally inadequate "reforms" of his father seemed to him excessive, unfortunate and dangerous. He considered them a deplorable mistake. Instead of understanding that the assassination was a consequence of their inadequacy and that they had to be broadened, he, on the contrary, saw in them the cause of the evil. And he took advantage of the murder of his father to oppose the "reforms" in every possible way.

He set out to distort their spirit, to counteract their effects, and to create obstacles for them through a long series of reactionary laws. *The bureaucratic and repressive State regained its rights. Every movement, every expression of liberal thought, was stifled.*

The Tsar obviously could not re-establish serfdom. But the working masses were condemned to remain more than ever in their condition as an indistinct herd, good for exploiting, and deprived of all human rights.

The slightest contact between the cultivated strata and the people again became suspect and impossible. The "Russian paradox," the unbridgeable gap between the cultural level and the aspirations of the higher strata and the somber and unthinking life of the people, remained intact.

Social activity of any type was once again prohibited. What survived of the timid reforms of Alexander II was reduced to a caricature.

Under these conditions, the rebirth of revolutionary activity was inevitable.

This was in fact what took place. But the form, as well as the very essence, of this activity was totally transformed by new economic, social and psychological factors.

A peasant village in 19th century Russia.

CHAPTER 4

The End of the Century; Marxism; Rapid Evolution; Reaction (1881-1900)

After the failure of the *Narodnaya Volya* party's violent campaign against Tsarism, other events contributed to the fundamental transformation of the Russian revolutionary movement. The most important was *the appearance of Marxism.*

As is known, Marxism expressed a new conception of social struggle: a conception which led to a concrete program of revolutionary action and, in western Europe, to a working class political party called the Social Democratic Party.

In spite of all the obstacles, the socialist ideas of Lassalle and the concepts and achievements of Marxism were known, studied, preached, and clandestinely practiced in Russia; even the legal literature excelled in the art of dealing with socialism by using a veiled language. The well-known "large journals" reappeared with great enthusiasm; among their contributors were the best journalists and publicists of the time, who regularly analyzed social problems, socialist doctrines, and the means to realize them. The importance of these publications for the cultural life of the country cannot be exaggerated. No intellectual family could be without them. In the libraries, it was necessary to place one's name on a waiting list to obtain the latest issue. More than one generation of Russians received its social education from these journals, completing this education by reading all types of clandestine publications.

Thus Marxist ideology, basing itself solely on the *organized action* of the proletariat, came to replace the disappointed hopes of earlier conspiratorial circles.

The other important event was the increasingly rapid development of industry and technology, with all their far-

reaching consequences.

Railway networks, other means of transportation, mining, oil drilling, metallurgy, textile and machine tool industries—all of these productive activities developed with great strides, making up for lost time. Industrial regions sprang up throughout the country. The environment of numerous cities changed rapidly due to the new factories and the growing population of workers.

This industrial upsurge was supported by a labor force consisting of large masses of miserable peasants who were forced either to abandon their inadequate plots of land permanently, or to look for additional work during winter. As elsewhere, industrial development meant development of the proletarian class. And as elsewhere, this class began to furnish contingents to the revolutionary movement.

Thus, diffusion of Marxist ideas and growth of the industrial proletariat on which the Marxists depended, were the basic elements which determined the new situation.

Industrial development and the rising standard of living in general required in all fields educated people, professionals, technicians and skilled workers. The number of schools of all types—official, municipal and private—increased continually in the cities and the countryside; universities, special technical schools and other higher institutions, primary schools, professional courses, sprang up everywhere. (In 1875, 79% of the drafted soldiers were illiterate; by 1898 this figure had fallen to 55%.)

This entire development took place outside the framework of the absolutist political regime and even in opposition to it. The regime stubbornly held on—an increasingly rigid, absurd and obtrusive carcass on top of the living body of the country.

Consequently, in spite of the cruel repression, the antimonarchist movement as well as revolutionary and socialist propaganda became increasingly widespread.

Even the peasant population—the most backward and the most oppressed—began to budge, prodded as much by the poverty and the inhuman exploitation as by the echoes of widespread agitation. These echoes were carried to the peasants by the numerous intellectuals who worked in the

"Zemstvos" (at the time these people were known as "zemstkii rabotniki": "zemstvo workers," by workers who had family ties with the countryside, by seasonal workers and by the agricultural proletariat. The government was powerless against this propaganda.

Toward the end of the century, two clear-cut forces confronted each other irreconcilably. One was the ancient force of reaction which consisted of the highly privileged classes who gathered around the throne: the nobility, the bureaucracy, the landowners, the military caste, the upper clergy and the nascent bourgeoisie. The other was the young revolutionary force which in 1890-1900 consisted mainly of the mass of students but which had already begun to recruit from among young workers in cities and industrial regions.

In 1898, the revolutionary current with a Marxist tendency created the *Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party* (the first social-democratic group, called "Emancipation of Labor," had been founded in 1883).

Between these two clearly opposed forces stood a third, which consisted mainly of representatives of the middle class and a certain number of "distinguished" intellectuals: university professors, lawyers, writers, doctors. It was a timidly liberal movement. Even though they secretly and very prudently gave support to revolutionary activity, these people had greater faith in reforms, hoping that under the threat of imminent revolution (as during the reign of Alexander II) the absolutist regime would grant large concessions, eventually leading to the establishment of a constitutional regime.

Only the peasant masses continued to remain outside of this ferment.

Emperor Alexander III died in 1894. His place was taken by his son Nicholas, the last of the Romanovs.

A vague legend claimed that the new Tsar professed liberal ideas. It was even said that he was disposed to grant "his people" a constitution which would seriously limit the absolutist powers of the Tsars.

Taking their desires for realities, certain liberal "zemstvos" (municipal councils) presented the young Tsar with petitions in which they very timidly asked for some rights of representation.

In January, 1895, on the occasion of the marriage of Nicholas II, various delegations of the nobility, the military and the "Zemstvos" were ceremoniously received by the Tsar in St. Petersburg. To the great amazement of the municipal delegates, the new master, while accepting the congratulations, suddenly grew angry and, stamping his foot and shouting hysterically, called on the "zemstvos" to renounce their "crazy dreams" forever. This demand was immediately emphasized by repressive measures against certain "instigators" of the "subversive" attitude of the "zemstvos." Thus absolutism and reaction reaffirmed themselves once again, contemptuous of the general development of the country.

CHAPTER 5

The 20th Century; Hasty Development; Revolutionary Advance; Results (1900-1905)

The events and characteristics which we have just mentioned became even more pronounced at the beginning of the twentieth century.

On the one hand, instead of recognizing the aspirations of society, the absolutist regime decided to maintain itself by all possible means and to suppress not only all revolutionary movements, but also any expression of opposition. It was during this period that the government of Nicholas II diverted the growing discontent of the population by means of large-scale anti-Semitic propaganda followed by the instigation—and even the organization—of Jewish *pogroms.*

On the other hand, the economic development of the country continued at an accelerated pace. In a period of five years, from 1900 to 1905, industry and technology made an enormous leap. Petroleum production (at Baku), coal (at Donetz), and the production of metals, were rapidly reaching the level of other industrial countries. Roads and means of transportation (railroads, motor transport, river and ocean transport) were enlarged and modernized. Large construction plants employing thousands and even tens of thousands of workers rose or expanded on the outskirts of the large cities. Entire industrial regions sprang up or were expanded. For example, we can list the large Putilov factories, the extensive Nevsky shipyards, the large Baltic Factory, as well as others in St. Petersburg; industrial suburbs of the capital with tens of thousands of workers such as Kolpino, Chukhovo, Sestrorech; the industrial region of Ivanovo-Voznessensk near Moscow; and several important factories in southern Russia: Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav and elsewhere. This rapid development was not well known abroad outside of in-

terested groups. (There are many who, even today, believe that before the rise of Bolshevism, there was almost no industry in Russia; that industry was created entirely by the Bolshevik government.) Nevertheless, the development was considerable, not only from a purely industrial standpoint, but also socially. Industrialization brought about the rapid growth of proletarian elements. According to the statistics of the period, there were about three million workers in Russia in 1905.

At the same time the country made rapid advances in cultural matters.

The education of adults was also progressing rapidly.

In 1905 there were about thirty universities and schools of higher learning in Russia, for men and women. Almost all these institutions depended on the State (except for a few that were supported by private municipal funds). Following an old tradition, but mainly as a result of the reforms of Alexander II, the statutes of the universities were quite liberal and allowed a great deal of internal independence (autonomy). Alexander III and Nicholas II tried to diminish these. But every attempt of this type provoked major disorders. The government finally gave up such projects.

The professors of the universities and higher schools were chosen from among university graduates according to a specific procedure.

Almost all cities, even unimportant ones, had high schools and preparatory schools for boys and girls. The secondary schools were founded by the State, by individuals or by the "zemstvos." In all three cases the teaching programs were established by the State, and the teaching was perceptibly similar. The teaching of religion was obligatory.

The teaching staff of the secondary schools was recruited from the university community with minor exceptions. The program of studies leading to the diploma, which gave access to the university, lasted eight years. Students who were unprepared could spend a year in a preparatory class, in addition to the eight obligatory years.

The number of primary schools in the cities and in the countryside increased rapidly. Some were founded by the State; others by municipalities and "zemstvos." All of them

were under the surveillance and control of the State. Primary education was free. It was not compulsory. The State naturally imposed the catechism in the primary schools. The men and women who taught in the primary schools had to have at least a diploma for four years of secondary school.

Evening courses for adults and some well organized "popular universities," which were well attended, functioned in all the large cities. Municipalities and particularly individuals devoted themselves to these institutions with great zeal.

The children of workers and peasants were obviously rare in the high schools and universities. The cost of this education was too high.

Nevertheless, contrary to a widespread legend, access to these schools was not forbidden either for the children of workers or the children of peasants. The majority of the students came from families of intellectuals from the liberal professions, functionaries, clerical workers, and from bourgeois families.

The fact that intellectual circles professed a *credo* which was at least liberal made it possible for a propaganda of fairly progressive ideas to take place outside of the school curriculum in numerous municipal and popular schools and institutions, in spite of police surveillance.

The lecturers of the "popular universities" and the teachers of the primary schools often came from revolutionary circles. Some directors, usually with liberal leanings, tolerated them. They knew how to "arrange things." In these circumstances the authorities were hardly able to oppose this propaganda.

In addition to schooling and conversation, education took place through writings.

An immense quantity of popular pamphlets, in general written by scholars or consisting of excerpts from the great writers, appeared on the market. These pamphlets dealt with all the sciences and analyzed political and social problems in a very progressive spirit. The official censorship was powerless against this mounting flood. The authors and publishers discovered numerous ways to deceive the vigilance of the authorities.

If we add the wide diffusion of clandestine revolutionary

and socialist literature in intellectual and working class circles, we will have a good idea of the vast movement of education and preparation which characterizes the period between 1900 and 1905.

We have permitted ourselves to present certain details which are necessary for an understanding of the extent and the progressive character of the revolutionary movements which followed. We should emphasize that this movement of political and social aspirations was completed by a remarkable moral development.

Young people liberated themselves from all prejudices: religious, national, sexual. In some respects Russian avant garde circles had for a long time been more advanced than those in western countries. The equality of races and nations, the equality of the sexes, free marriage *(union libre),* the negation of religion, were inherited truths in these circles; indeed, they had been practiced since the time of the "Nihilists." In all these fields, Russian writers (Belinski, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolubov, Pissarev, Mikhailovsky) accomplished an enormous task. They taught several generations of intellectuals the meaning of total liberation, and they did this in spite of the compulsory education with an opposite content imposed by the Tsarist system of secondary education.

This spirit of liberation ultimately became an inalienable *sacred tradition* for Russian youth. While they submitted to the officially imposed education, young people got out from under its rod as soon as they received the diploma.

"Do not go to the University!" shouted the bishop of our diocese when the diplomas were ceremoniously distributed among us, students graduating from high school. "Do not go to the University. Because the University is a den of rioters . . ." (Where did he want us to go?) He knew what was happening, this honorable bishop. It was in fact the case that, with few exceptions, all young men and women who went to the universities became potential revolutionaries. Among the people, "student" meant "rebel."

Afterwards, when they grew older, these one-time rebels, broken by the problems and misfortunes of life, forgot and often denied their first impulses. But something generally re-

mained: a liberal credo, a spirit of opposition, and sometimes a living spark which was ready to burn on the first serious occasion.

Nevertheless, the political, economic and social situation of the working population remained unchanged.

Exposed to the growing exploitation of the State and the bourgeoisie, without any means of defense, lacking all rights to congregate, to be heard, to impose their demands, to organize, to struggle, to strike, the workers were materially and morally dissatisfied.

In the countryside, the poverty and dissatisfaction of the peasant masses continued to grow. The peasants—175 million men, women and children—were abandoned and were considered a sort of "human herd" (corporal punishment was a reality for them until 1904, even though it had been abolished legally in 1863). A lack of general culture and elementary education; primitive and insufficient tools; the absence of credit or any other form of protection or aid; very high taxes; arbitrary, contemptuous and cruel treatment by the authorities and "superior" classes; continual parcelling of their plots as a consequence of the division of the land among new members of families; competition between the "kulaks" (wealthy peasants) and the landed gentry—such were the varied causes of their misery. Even the "peasant community"—the famous Russian *mir*—was no longer able to support its members. Furthermore, the government of Alexander III and that of his successor Nicholas II did everything they could to reduce the *mir* to a simple administrative body, closely observed and policed by the State, a body whose primary purpose was to force the peasants to pay taxes and fees.

It was thus inevitable that socialist and revolutionary propaganda and activity should meet with a certain success. Marxism, spread clandestinely but energetically, found numerous followers, mainly among students, but also among workers. The influence of the Social-Democratic Party, founded in 1898, could be felt in many cities and in certain regions, despite the fact that this party was illegal (as were all others).

The government's severity against militants became increasingly brutal. There were countless political trials. Mea-

sures of administrative and police repression savagely struck thousands of "subjects." Prisons, places of exile and hard labor camps filled up. However, although the authorities were able to reduce the activity and influence of the party to a minimum, they did not succeed in stifling it, as they had succeeded earlier in stifling the first political groups.

After 1900, despite all the efforts of the authorities, the revolutionary movement grew considerably. Disorders among students and among workers became daily events. In fact, universities were frequently closed for several months precisely because of political troubles. The response of students, supported by workers, was to organize resounding demonstrations at public places. At St. Petersburg, the square of the Kazan Cathedral became the classical spot for these popular demonstrations where students and workers gathered, singing revolutionary songs and at times carrying red flags. The government sent detachments of police and Cossacks on horseback to "clean up" the square and the neighboring streets with swords and whips *(nagaikas).*

The Revolution began to conquer the streets.

Nevertheless, in order to give the reader an accurate idea of the general situation, we should make another reservation.

The picture we have just painted is accurate. *But by referring only to this picture,* without making major corrections, without referring constantly to the *large totality* of the country and the people, we will run the risk of exaggerating, and will end up making erroneous general evaluations which will not lead to an understanding of later events.

We should not forget that, out of the immense mass of more than 180 million people, the groups influenced by the intellectual movement we have described consisted of a very small stratum. In fact, it consisted of a few thousand intellectuals, mainly students, and the elite of the working class of the large cities. The rest of the population: the innumerable peasant masses, the majority of the city inhabitants and even the majority of the working population, were still outside the revolutionary ferment, indifferent and even hostile to it. The members of advanced circles did increase rapidly; from 1900 on the number of workers won to the cause grew

continually; the revolutionary outburst also reached the increasingly miserable peasant masses. But at the same time, the vast mass of the people—*the mass whose activity alone determines major social changes*—retained its primitive outlook. The "Russian paradox" remained nearly intact, and the "legend of the Tsar" continued to dazzle millions of human beings. *In relation to this mass,* the movement in question was no more than a small and superficial ferment (only four workers took part in the Social-Democratic Congress in London, 1903).

In these conditions, all contact between those in front, who were way ahead, and the mass of the population, who remained way behind, was impossible.

The reader should constantly keep this in mind in order to understand the events that followed.

In 1901 revolutionary activity was enriched by a new element: alongside the Social-Democratic Party rose the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. The propaganda of this party quickly met with considerable success.

The two parties differed from each other on three essential points:

1. Philosophically and sociologically, the Socialist-Revolutionary Party disagreed with Marxist doctrine;

2. Due to its anti-Marxism, this party elaborated a different solution for the peasant problem (the most important in Russia). While the Social-Democratic Party, basing itself solely on the *working class,* did not count on the *peasant masses* (it waited for their rapid proletarianization), and consequently neglected rural propaganda, the Socialist-Revolutionary Party hoped to win the Russian peasant masses to the revolutionary and socialist cause. The latter considered it impossible to wait for the peasants' proletarianization. Consequently it carried out large-scale propaganda in the countryside. The Social-Democratic Party's agrarian program anticipated nothing more than the enlargement of the peasants' plots and other minor reforms, whereas the minimum program of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party included the complete and immediate socialization of the land.

"For Land and Liberty" St. Petersburg, 1905.

3. Perfectly consistent with its doctrine, the Social-Democratic Party, counting on the action of the *masses,* rejected all terrorist activity and all political assassinations as socially useless. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party, on the other hand, attached a certain public utility to assassination attempts against high Tsarist officials who were excessively zealous or cruel. It even created a special body called the "combat organism," which was charged with preparing and carrying out political assassinations under the direction of the Central Committee.

Except for these differences, the short-term political and social programs ("minimum programs") of the two parties were almost the same: a bourgeois democratic republic which would pave the way for an evolution toward socialism.

From 1901 to 1905 the Socialist-Revolutionary Party carried out several assassination attempts, some of which had major repercussions. In 1902 the student Balmachev, a young militant of the party, assassinated Sipiagin, Minister of the Interior; in 1904 another Socialist-Revolutionary student, Sazonov, killed von Plehve, the well known and cruel successor to Sipiagin; in 1905, the Socialist-Revolutionary Kalayev killed the Grand Duke Serge, governor ("the hideous satrap") of Moscow.

In addition to the two political parties, there was also a small anarchist movement. Extremely weak and totally unknown by the population, it consisted of some groups of intellectuals and workers (peasants in the South) without permanent contact. There may have been two anarchist groups in St. Petersburg and about that many in Moscow (the latter were the stronger and more active), as well as groups in the South and West. Their activity was limited to a weak (though nevertheless extremely difficult) propaganda, some assassination attempts against overly zealous servants of the regime, and some acts of "individual revenge." Libertarian literature was smuggled from abroad; this consisted largely of pamphlets by Kropotkin, who had himself been forced to emigrate after the collapse of the *Narodnaya Volya,* and had settled in England.

The rapid increase of revolutionary activity after 1900 alarmed the government. What bothered the authorities most was the fact that the propaganda was favorably received by the working population. In spite of their illegal and therefore difficult existence, both socialist parties had committees, propaganda circles, clandestine print shops and fairly numerous groups in the major cities. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party successfully committed assassinations the repercussions of which attracted a great deal of attention and even admiration. The government decided that its methods of defense and repression—surveillance, espionage, provocation, prison, pogroms—were inadequate. In order to draw the working masses away from the influence of the socialist parties and all other revolutionary activity, it conceived a Machiavellian plan which was logically to lead to the government's mastery over the workers' movement. It decided to launch a *legal, authorized* workers' organization which the government itself commanded. It was thus going to kill two birds with one stone: on one side it would attract toward itself the sympathy, gratitude and devotion of the working class, pulling it away from the revolutionary parties; on the other side, it would be able to lead this workers' movement wherever it wanted, while keeping close watch on it.

There was no doubt that the task was delicate. It was necessary to attract workers into State organisms, calm their suspicions, interest them, flatter them, seduce them, and dupe them, without their being aware of it; it was necessary to pretend to satisfy their aspirations, eclipse the parties, neutralize their propaganda, and go beyond them—especially with concrete acts. To succeed, the government would be obliged to go to the point of agreeing to make certain concessions of an economic or social order, while constantly keeping the workers at its mercy, manipulating them at will.

Such a "program" had to be executed by men in whom the government had absolute confidence, men who were cunning, skillful and experienced, who were familiar with the psychology of workers, who knew how to impose themselves on workers and win their confidence.

The government finally chose two agents of the political secret police *(Okhrana),* who were charged with the mission

of carrying out this project. One was Zubatov, for Moscow; the other was a priest, chaplain in a St. Petersburg prison, Father Gapon.

The government of the Tsar wanted to play with fire. Before long it burned itself cruelly.

PART II

THE JOLT (1905–1906)

CHAPTER 1
The Gaponist Epic; First General Strike

In Moscow Zubatov was fairly quickly unmasked. He was not able to accomplish a great deal. But in St. Petersburg the affair went much better. Gapon, very crafty, working in the shadows, knew how to win the confidence and even the affection of groups of workers. Genuinely talented as an agitator and organizer, he succeeded in setting up so-called "Workers' Sections" which he personally led and which he stimulated with his energetic activity. Toward the end of 1904 there were eleven of these sections, located in different areas of the capital, with a membership of several thousands.

Workers voluntarily attended these "Sections" in the evening to discuss their problems, listen to lectures, look at the newspapers. Since the entrance was rigorously guarded by the Gaponist workers themselves, the militants of the political parties could not easily get in. And even if they got in, they were quickly spotted and thrown out.

The St. Petersburg workers took their sections very seriously. Having complete confidence in Gapon, they told him about their misfortunes and their aspirations, and discussed ways to improve their situation, examining various methods of struggling against the bosses. Himself the son of poor peasants and having spent his life among workers, Gapon perfectly understood the psychology of the workers who confided in him. He was extremely good at pretending approval and genuine empathy for the workers' movement. Such was also his official mission, at least at the beginning.

The proposition which the government wanted to impose on the workers in their sections was the following: "Workers, you can improve your situation by applying yourselves to this task meticulously, within legal limits, in the context of your sections. To succeed you don't need to engage in poli-

Workers of the Putilov factory discussing proclamation of the strike.

tics. Concern yourselves with your concrete personal and immediate interests, and you'll soon be leading a happier life. Parties and political struggles, recipes proposed by bad shepherds—the socialists and the revolutionaries—won't lead you to anything worth having. Concern yourselves with your immediate economic interests. This is permitted, and it's only in this way that you'll really improve your situation. The government is very concerned about you and will help you." Such was the thesis that Gapon and his helpers, recruited from among the workers themselves, preached and elaborated in the sections.

The workers did not wait to respond to the invitation. They prepared an action. They developed and formulated their demands, with Gapon's agreement. In his extremely delicate situation, Gapon had to take part. If he failed to do so, he would immediately provoke discontent among the workers; he would certainly even be accused of betraying their interests and supporting the boss's side. He would lose his popularity. Even more serious suspicions would arise. If this happened, his work would be ruined. In his double game Gapon had above all else and at all costs to retain the sympathies he had known how to win. He understood this well and he acted as if he completely supported the workers' cause, hoping to be able to retain mastery of the movement, manipulate the masses at will, direct, shape and channel their action.

But the opposite took place. The movement quickly went beyond the limits that had been assigned to it. It rapidly acquired unforeseen amplitude, vigor and momentum, burning all the calculations, overturning all the expectations of its authors. It soon became a veritable flood which carried Gapon with it.

In December, 1904, the workers of the Putilov factory, one of the largest in St. Petersburg, and one where Gapon had numerous followers and friends, decided to begin the action. With Gapon's agreement, they drew up and gave the managers a list of economic demands which were very moderate. At the end of the month they learned that the managers "did not believe it possible to consider these demands" and that the government was powerless to do anything about it. Fur-

thermore, the managers of the factory fired some workers who were considered leaders. It was demanded that they be reinstated. The management refused.

The indignation and anger of the workers was immense. first of all, their long and laborious efforts had led to nothing. Secondly, and more importantly, they had been led to believe that their efforts would be crowned with success. Gapon himself had encouraged them, had filled them with hope. And here their first step along the good legal road had brought them nothing but a bitter failure which could in no way be justified. They felt tricked and morally they felt obliged to intervene in favor of their fired comrades.

Naturally their eyes turned toward Gapon. To save his prestige and his role, Gapon acted more indignant than anyone else and urged the workers to go to the Putilov factory to react vigorously. They did not hesitate. Feeling themselves safe, continuing to limit themselves to purely economic demands, protected by the sections and by Gapon, they decided, after several turbulent meetings, to support their cause with a strike. The government, trusting Gapon, did not intervene. It is thus that the strike at the Putilov factories, the first major strike in Russia, broke out in December, 1904.

But the movement did not stop there. All the Workers' Sections stirred and moved to defend the action of the Putilov workers. They very rightly understood the failure of the Putilov workers as a general failure. Gapon naturally had to side with the sections. In the evening he visited all of them, giving speeches everywhere in favor of the Putilov strikers and urging workers to support them with decisive actions.

Some days passed. Extraordinary agitation shook the masses of workers of the capital. Factories emptied spontaneously. Without signal or sign, without preparation or leadership, the Putilov strike became a nearly general strike of the workers of St. Petersburg.

And it was a tempest. The strikers rushed en masse toward the sections, disregarding all formalities and rules, calling for immediate and impressive action.

In short, the strike alone was not enough. It was necessary to act, *to do something:* something large, impressive, decisive. This was the general feeling.

It was then that a fantastic idea was formulated, no one knows exactly how or where—the idea of preparing a "petition" to the Tsar in the name of unhappy workers and peasants *of all the Russias;* the idea of a massive demonstration in front of the Winter Palace to support the petition; the idea of giving the petition to the Tsar himself through a delegation headed by Gapon, asking the Tsar to listen to the miseries of his people. However naive and paradoxical it might have been, this idea spread like wildfire among the workers of St. Petersburg. It unified them, inspired them, made them enthusiastic. It gave a meaning and a precise goal to their movement.

The sections, joining together with the masses, decided to organize the action. Gapon was charged with drafting the petition. Once again he agreed. Thus by force of circumstances he became the leader of a major, historical movement of the masses.

The petition was ready during the first days of January, 1905. Simple and moving, it exuded devotion and confidence. The sufferings of the people were elaborated with a great deal of feeling and sincerity. The Tsar was asked to turn to these sufferings, to agree to effective reforms and to see them carried through.

It is strange, but unquestionable, that Gapon's petition was an inspired and genuinely moving work.

The next step was to have the petition adopted by all the sections, to communicate it to the mass of the population and to organize the march toward the Winter Palace.

In the meantime a new factor came into play. Some revolutionaries belonging to the political parties (until this moment the parties had stayed away from "Gaponism") met with Gapon. Their main aim was to influence him to give his attitude, his petition and his action a style which was less "submissive," more dignified, more firm—in short, more revolutionary. Circles of progressive workers also drove him in this direction. Gapon gracefully gave in. Some Socialist Revolutionaries established relations with him. In agreement with them, he changed his original petition, enlarging it considerably, and playing down its loyal devotion to the Tsar.

In its final form, the "petition" was the greatest histori-

cal paradox that ever existed. It was loyally addressed to the Tsar and it asked the Tsar to authorize, and even carry out, neither more nor less than a thoroughgoing revolution which would, in the last analysis, eliminate his power. In fact, the entire minimum program of the revolutionary parties was included in it. Among the urgent measures demanded were: complete freedom of the press, of speech, of thought; absolute freedom for all associations and organizations; the right of workers to join unions, the right to strike; some agrarian laws leading to the expropriation of the large landowners in favor of peasant communities; and finally the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of a democratic electoral law. It was a blunt invitation to suicide.

Here is the complete and final text of the "petition":

Lord,

We, the workers of St. Petersburg, our wives, our children and our parents, old people with no resources, have come to You, Oh Tsar, to ask you for justice and protection.

We are reduced to beggars. We are oppressed, crushed under the weight of exhausting labor, drenched in insults. We are not considered human beings but are treated as slaves who must suffer their sad fate in silence. We have suffered all this patiently. But we are now being thrown to the very bottom of the abyss where only ignorance and despotism will be our lot. We are being smothered by despotism and by a treatment contrary to all human laws.

We can endure no more, Oh Tsar! The terrible moment has come when we would really rather die than continue our unbearable sufferings. This is why we have stopped working and why we told our bosses that we will not return until they have granted our just demands.

We have asked for very little, yet without the little we have asked for our life is not a life, but a hell, an eternal torture.

Our first request asks our bosses to take full account of our needs, in agreement with us. And they have refused! We have been denied the very right to discuss our needs, under the pretext that the law does not recognize such a right.

Our demand for an eight hour day has also been rejected as illegal.

We have asked for participation in the determination of our wages; for arbitration in case of disagreement between us and the internal administration of the factory; for a minimum wage of a rouble a day for unskilled workers, men and women; for the suppression of overtime; for safety in the workplaces so that those who work there will not die of wind, rain or snow . . . We have also asked for care for the sick; we have also asked that orders given to us not be accompanied by insults.

All these demands have been rejected as contrary to the law. The

very act of formulating demands has been interpreted as a crime. The desire to improve our situation is considered by our bosses as insolence toward them.

Oh Emperor! Those of us here number more than 300,000 human beings. And yet we are human beings only in appearance. In reality we have no human rights. We are not allowed to speak, to think, to meet for the purpose of discussing our needs, to take measures to improve our situation. Whoever among us dares to raise his voice in favor of the working class is thrown into prison or exile. To have a generous heart and a sensitive soul are considered crimes. To express feelings of fraternity toward the unfortunate, the homeless, the victimized, the fallen, is an abominable crime.

Oh Tsar! Is all this consistent with the commandments of God, through whose power you govern? Is life worth living under such laws? Would it not be preferable for all of us, Russian workers, to die, leaving the capitalists and the functionaries to live alone and enjoy their lives?

Lord, such is the future that awaits us. And this is why we are assembled in front of Your palace. You are our last hope; Do not refuse to help bring Your people out of the pit of outlaws where there is only misery and ignorance. Give Your people a chance, a means to realize their real destiny. Deliver them from the intolerable oppression of the bureaucrats. Demolish the wall that separates You from the people and call them to rule the country jointly with You.

You have been sent down here to lead the people to happiness. Yet bit by bit, happiness is taken from us by your functionaries, who give us only pain and humiliation.

Look over our demands with attention and without anger. They have been formulated, not for evil, but for good, for our good, Lord, and for Yours. It is not insolence that speaks in us, but awareness of the general need to put an end to the insupportable situation of today.

Russia is too enormous, its needs are too varied for her to be led by a government composed solely of bureaucrats. It is absolutely necessary for the people to participate in the government, because only the people know their needs.

Do not, therefore, refuse to help Your people. Tell the representatives of all the classes in the country to assemble without delay. Let the capitalists and the workers be represented. Let the functionaries, the priests, the doctors and the professors choose their delegates as well. Let each be free to elect whoever pleases him. To this end, allow the election of a Constituent Assembly under a system of universal suffrage.

This is our central demand; everything else depends on it. This would be the best and the only real balm for our open wounds. If it is not applied, our wounds will remain open and we will bleed to death.

There is no panacea for all our ills. Various cures are needed. We are going to list them now. We speak to you with sincerity, with open hearts, Lord, as to a father.

The following measures are indispensable.

The first group consists of measures against the absence of all rights and against the ignorance which marks the Russian people. These measures include:

1. Personal freedom and integrity; freedom of speech, of the press, of association, of thought in religious matters; separation of Church and State.

2. State-supported universal and compulsory education.

3. Ministers who are responsible before the nation; guarantees for the legality of administrative measures.

4. Equality of all individuals before the law, without exception.

5. Immediate release of all those imprisoned for their beliefs.

The second group consists of measures against poverty:

1. Abolition of all indirect taxation. Direct and progressive taxation of incomes.

2. Repeal of the fees for the purchase of lands. Low interest credit. gradual remission of the land to the people.

The third group consists of measures against the crushing of labor by capital:

1. Legal protection of labor.

2. The freedom of workers to establish unions for the purpose of cooperation and to regulate professional problems.

3. An eight-hour working day; restriction of overtime.

4. The freedom of labor to struggle against capital.

5. Participation of representatives of the working class in the preparation of a law on State insurance for the workers.

6. Minimum wages.

These, Lord, are our principal needs. Command their fulfillment. Swear to us that this shall be done, and You will make Russia happy and glorious, and Your name will forever be inscribed in our hearts, in the hearts of our children and of our children's children.

But if You do not give Your promise, if You do not accept our petition, we have decided to die here, on this square, in front of Your palace, because we have nowhere to go, nor any reason to be elsewhere. For us, only two paths are open: one leads to freedom and happiness, the other, to the grave. Point to one of these paths, oh Tsar, and we will follow it, even if it leads us to death.

If our lives become a holocaust for suffering Russia, we will not regret the sacrifice. We offer it with joy.

It is noteworthy that despite all the paradoxical elements of the situation that was created, the action which was being prepared was no more, for an informed observer, than the logical outcome of the combined pressure of various real fac-

tors; it was a natural "synthesis" of the various elements at play.

On the one hand, the idea of a collective demonstration before the Tsar was in essence nothing more than a manifestation of the naive faith of the popular masses in the Tsar's good will. (We have already described the hold which the "legend of the Tsar" exerted on the people). Russian workers, who had never broken their bond with the countryside, momentarily returned to the ancient peasant tradition by going to ask the "little father" for help and protection. Taking advantage of the unusual situation which was offered to them, roused by a spontaneous and irresistible outburst, they undoubtedly tried to point to the sore spot, to obtain a concrete and definitive solution. While expecting, from the bottom of their hearts, at least a partial success, they wanted most of all to know where they stood.

On the other hand, the influence of the revolutionary parties—who could do nothing but stand aside, too powerless to stop the movement, not to speak of substituting for it a more revolutionary movement—was nevertheless strong enough to exert some pressure on Gapon, obliging him to "revolutionize" his act.

In short the act was a bastard, but natural, product of the forces in play.

As for intellectual and liberal circles, they could do no more than passively observe the events as they unfolded.

The behavior and psychology of Gapon himself, paradoxical as they may seem, can nevertheless be easily explained. Originally no more than a clown, an agent in the pay of the police, he was swept along by the tremendous wave of the popular movement which drove him irresistibly forward. The movement ultimately carried him with it. Events placed him, despite himself, at the head of crowds who idolized him. Adventurous and romantic in spirit, he must have let himself be nursed by an illusion. Instinctively aware of the historical importance of the events, he probably drew himself an exaggerated picture. He could already see the entire country undergoing a revolution, the throne in danger, and himself, Gapon, supreme leader of the movement, idol of the people, carried to the summit of glory. Fascinated by this dream that

Father Gapon, shown here with members of one of the workers' "sections" and the Chief of Police of Petrograd.

reality seemed to justify, he finally gave himself body and soul to the movement he had started. His role as police agent ceased to interest him. He no longer even thought of it during the course of these feverish days, completely dazzled by the lightning of the enormous storm, completely absorbed by his new role, which must have seemed to him almost a divine mission. Such was probably the outlook of Gapon at the beginning of January, 1905. It is reasonable to assume that at this moment, and in this sense, he was sincere. At least that's the personal impression of the author of these lines, who met Gapon a few days before the events and saw him in action.

Even the strangest factor of all—the silence of the government and the complete absence of all police intervention during the days of feverish preparation—can easily be explained. The police could not read the thoughts of the new Gapon. They trusted him to the very end, interpreting his action as a clever move. And when the police finally did become aware of the change and the imminent danger, they could no longer stop or master the events that broke out. Somewhat disconcerted at first, the government finally decided to wait for the opportunity to wipe out the movement in a single blow. For a moment, having received no orders, the police didn't budge. We should add that this incomprehensible and mysterious fact encouraged the masses and raised their hopes. "The government doesn't dare oppose the movement; it'll give in," people commented.

The march toward the Winter Palace was set for Sunday morning, January 9 (old calendar). The last days were devoted mainly to public readings of the "petition" at the "sections." The same sequence was repeated almost everywhere. During the course of the day, Gapon himself or one of his friends read and commented on the petition to masses of workers who took turns filling the meeting places. As soon as the place filled, the door was closed and the petition was read; those present signed their names on a separate sheet and left the room. Another crowd of people who had patiently waited for their turn in the street filled the room, and the ceremony was repeated. This continued to take place in all the sections until after midnight.

What gave a tragic note to these last preparations was the supreme appeal of the orator and the crowd's solemn, grim oath in response to the appeal. "Comrade workers, peasants and others!" said the orator, "Brothers in misery! Be loyal to the cause and to the demonstration, all of you. Come to the square in front of the Winter Palace on Sunday morning. Your failure to do so will be treason to our cause. But come quietly and peacefully, living up to the solemn hour that strikes. Father Gapon has already warned the Tsar and has personally assured him that he will be safe among you. If you allow yourselves a misplaced act, Father Gapon will have to answer for it. You have heard the petition. Our demands are just. We can no longer continue this miserable life. That's why we're going to the Tsar with open arms, our hearts full of love and hope. All he has to do is receive us and listen to our request. Gapon himself will give him the petition. Let us hope, comrades, let us hope, brothers, that the Tsar receives us, that he listens to us and that he takes steps to satisfy our just demands. But, brothers, if instead of receiving us, the Tsar turns on us with guns and swords, then, my brothers, pity for him! *Then we no longer have a Tsar. Then let him be damned forever, together with his entire dynasty!* Swear, all of you, comrades, brothers, plain citizens, swear that then you will never forget his betrayal. Swear that then you will try to destroy the traitor in every way possible . . ." And the entire assembly, completely carried away, raised their hands and answered: "We swear!"

Where Gapon himself read the petition—and he read it at least once at every section—he added: "I, the priest George Gapon, through the will of God, free you in that case from the oath given to the Tsar, and I bless in advance whosoever shall destroy him. Because *in that case we will no longer have a Tsar!"* Pale with emotion, he repeated this phrase two or three times to the silent and trembling audience.

"Swear that you'll follow me, swear on the heads of your dear ones, your children!" "Yes, father, yes! We swear on the heads of our children!" was invariably the response.

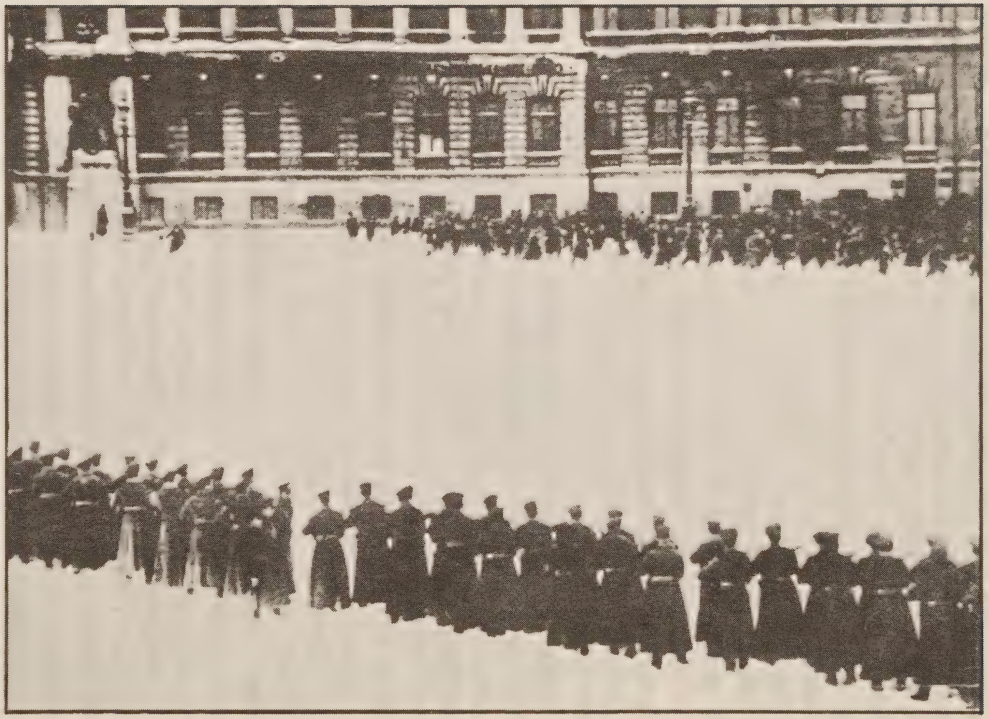
On January 8, in the evening, everything was ready for the march. Certain intellectual and literary circles learned that the decision of the government had been taken: under

no circumstances was the crowd to approach the Palace; if the crowd insisted, shoot without pity. In all haste, a delegation was dispatched to the authorities to try to prevent the shedding of blood. But in vain. All the orders had already been given. The capital was in the hands of troops armed to the teeth.

The rest is known. On Sunday, January 9, in the morning, an immense crowd composed mainly of workers (often with their families) as well as various other elements, began to move in the direction of the Winter Palace. Tens of thousands of people, men, women and children, starting out from all parts of the capital and its suburbs, marched toward the meeting place.

Everywhere they ran into curtains of troops and police who fired continuously at this human sea. But the pressure of this compact mass of people—a pressure which continued to increase from one minute to the next—was such that the crowd continued to move toward the palace anyway, and without pause, filling and congesting the streets around it. Thousands of people, dispersed by the shots, obstinately moved toward the goal, taking side streets and detours, moved by the impetus of the action, by curiosity, by anger, by the pressing need to cry out their indignation and their horror. There were many who continued, in spite of everything, to retain a spark of hope, believing that if only they could succeed in reaching the square in front of the Tsar's palace, the Tsar would come to them, would receive them and would mend everything. Others thought that, faced with a *fait accompli,* the Tsar could no longer resist and would be obliged to give in. Still others, the most naive, imagined that the Tsar was not aware of what was happening, that he knew nothing of the butchery, and that the police, after concealing the facts from the very beginning, were now trying to keep the people from coming into contact with the "Little Father." So they had to reach the Tsar at all costs . . . Furthermore, they had sworn to be there . . . And finally, Gapon was there; perhaps he had succeeded in reaching the Tsar . . .

In any case, waves of human beings broke through from every direction and finally invaded the immediate surroundings of the Winter Palace and entered the square itself. The



"The government found nothing better to do than to shoot, to sweep away the disarmed, distressed and despairing crowd with rounds of fire."

government found nothing better to do than to shoot, to sweep away the disarmed, distressed and despairing crowd with rounds of fire.

It was a terrifying spectacle, a vision which could hardly be imagined, unique in history. Machine-gunned point blank, screaming with fear, pain and rage, this immense crowd, unable either to advance or retreat because its own size prevented all movement, received what was later called a "blood bath." Driven back slightly by each round, as if by a strong gust of wind, partly trampled, suffocated, crushed, the crowd formed again, over dead bodies, over the dying, over the injured, pushed by new masses who arrived, and continued to arrive, from behind. And new rounds of fire periodically sent a shudder of death through this living mass. This went on for a long time: until the adjacent streets finally emptied, and the crowd was able to escape.

Hundreds of men, women and children perished on this day in the capital. The authorities intoxicated the soldiers so as to dull their consciences and remove all their scruples. Some soldiers, completely mindless, installed in a garden near the palace, amused themselves by "shooting down" children who had climbed trees "to see better."

Towards evening, "order was reestablished." The number of victims was never known, even approximately. But what is known is that, during that night, long trains filled with corpses transported all these poor bodies outside the city; they were buried haphazardly in fields and forests.

It was also known that the Tsar was not even in the capital on that day. After having given a free hand to the military authorities, he had taken refuge in one of his summer residences: at Tsarskoye Selo near St. Petersburg.

Gapon, surrounded by carriers of icons and pictures of the Tsar, led a large crowd which moved toward the palace by way of the Narva Gate. As elsewhere, this crowd was dispersed by troops stationed at the very approaches to the Gate. He barely escaped. As soon as the first shots were fired, he lay flat on his stomach and did not budge. For a few instants people thought he had been injured or killed. But he was quickly carried off to safety by friends. His long hair was cut, and he was dressed as a civilian.

Some time later he was abroad, completely out of reach.

Before he left Russia, he launched the following short appeal to the workers:

I, the pastor, curse all those, officers and soldiers, who in this hour massacred their innocent brothers, women, and children. I curse all the oppressors of the people. My blessing goes to the soldiers who give assistance to the people in their struggle for freedom. I release them from their oath of loyalty to the Tsar—the traitor Tsar whose orders caused the people's blood to flow.

In addition, he prepared another proclamation which said:

. . . Comrade workers, there is no longer a Tsar! Today torrents of blood flowed between him and the Russian people. The time has come for the Russian workers to undertake the struggle for the liberation of the people without him. You have my blessing in this struggle. Tomorrow I will be in your midst. Today I am working for the cause.

These appeals were distributed in great numbers throughout the country.

This might be the best place for a few words about the fate of Gapon.

Saved by his friends, the ex-priest settled abroad. Certain Socialist-Revolutionaries took care of him. From now on his future depended only on him. He was given everything he needed to break with his past, to complete his education and to formulate his ideological position, in short to really become a man of action.

But Gapon was not made of such stuff. The sacred fire which once accidentally burned in his dark soul was in him nothing more than the fire of ambition and personal indulgence; the spark went out quickly. Instead of devoting himself to the work of self-education and preparation for serious activity, Gapon was content with inactivity, mother of boredom. Slow, patient work meant nothing to him. He dreamed of an immediate and glorious repetition of his ephemeral adventure. But in Russia events dragged on. The great Revolution did not come. His boredom grew. He finally turned to debauchery to try to forget. He passed most of his time in shady cabarets where, half drunk, in the company of prostitutes, he wept bitterly about his broken illusions. His life

abroad disgusted him. The situation of his country tortured him. He wanted to return to Russia at any price.

So he conceived of the idea of writing to his government, asking for pardon and for permission to return in order to render his services again. He wrote to the secret police. He resumed his relations with it.

His former chiefs received his offer rather favorably. But before consenting they asked him for material proof of his repentance and his good will. Aware of his acquaintance with influential members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, they asked him to furnish precise information which would help them deal the decisive blow against this party. Gapon accepted the offer.

In the meantime, one of the influential members of the party, the engineer Rutemberg, Gapon's intimate friend, heard about the new relations between Gapon and the police. He mentioned the matter to the Central Committee of the party. The committee charged him (Rutemberg himself told about this in his memoirs) with the task of doing everything within his power to unmask Gapon.

Rutemberg had to play a role. He did this successfully and won the confidence of Gapon, who assumed that the engineer would voluntarily betray his party for a large sum of money. This was precisely what Gapon proposed to him. Rutemberg acted as if he accepted. It was agreed that, through Gapon, he would deliver to the police some very important party secrets.

They bargained about the price. This bargaining—which Rutemberg feigned and purposely dragged out, while Gapon carried it out with the agreement of the police—finally ended in Russia when Gapon as well as Rutemberg were able to return.

The last act of the play took place in St. Petersburg. As soon as he arrived, Rutemberg forewarned some workers who were Gapon's loyal friends; they refused to believe that he was a traitor; Rutemberg told them he could supply incontestable proof. It was agreed that the Gaponist workers be hidden at the last meeting between Gapon and Rutemberg, a meeting where the price to be paid for Rutemberg's "betrayal" was to be settled once and for all.

The meeting took place at a deserted villa not far from the capital. The workers, hidden in a room adjacent to the room where the meeting was taking place, were to remain in this room, without being seen, so as to be convinced of the real role of Gapon and to be able to unmask him publicly.

But the workers couldn't contain themselves. As soon as they were convinced of Gapon's treason, they burst into the room where the two men were talking. They threw themselves on Gapon, grabbed him and, despite his pleading (which was pathetic; he got down on his knees and begged for their pardon in the name of his past) killed him brutally. Then they put a rope around his neck and hung him from the ceiling. It was in this position that his body was accidentally found some time later.

Thus ended the personal epic of Gapon.

In his memoirs, which are largely sincere, Gapon tried—very awkwardly—to justify in his own way his relations with the police before January 9, 1905. On this point he seems not to have told the whole truth.

As for the movement, it followed on its course.

The events of January 9 had enormous repercussions throughout the country. In the darkest corners of the land, the population learned with indignant stupefaction that instead of listening to the people who had come peacefully to the Palace to tell their miseries to the Tsar, the ruler had coldly given the order to shoot. Over a long period of time, peasants delegated by their villages went secretly to St. Petersburg with the mission of learning the truth.

Soon everyone knew the truth. *It was only then that the "legend of the Tsar" disappeared.*

Another historical paradox! In 1881 some revolutionaries had assassinated the Tsar in order to kill the legend. It survived. Twenty-four years later it was the Tsar himself who killed it.

At St. Petersburg, the events of January 9 had the effect of enlarging the strike. It became a total general strike. On Monday, January 10, not a single factory or shipyard moved. A movement of muted revolt rumbled everywhere. The first great revolutionary strike of the Russian workers—the strike of the St. Petersburg workers—became an accomplished fact.

An important conclusion can be drawn from everything that precedes:

Before the population could begin to understand the real nature of Tsarism, the totality of the situation and the real tasks of the struggle, they needed to live through a tangible and extensive historical experience. Neither propaganda nor the sacrifices of enthusiasts could have led to this result by themselves.

CHAPTER 2
The Birth of the "Soviets"

We now arrive at one of the most important aspects of the Russian Revolution: *the origin and the initial activity of the "Soviets."*

Another paradoxical fact: this is one of the least understood and most frequently distorted aspects of the Revolution.

In all that has been written to this day on the origin of the "Soviets"—I do not only speak of foreign studies, but also of Russian documents—there is a gap which the interested reader cannot fail to notice: *no one has yet been able to determine precisely when, where or how the first workers' "Soviet" was formed.*

Until today, almost all writers and historians, bourgeois as well as socialist ("Menshevik," "Bolshevik" or other) dated the origin of the first "Workers' Soviet" *at the end of 1905*, at the time of the October general strike, of the well known Tsarist manifesto of October 17 and the events which followed. By reading the following pages the reader will understand the reason for this gap.

Some authors—notably P. Miliukov in his memoirs—vaguely allude to a forerunner of the future "Soviets" *at the beginning of 1905*. But they fail to give any precise details. And when they try to give details, they are wrong. Thus Miliukov believes that he found the origin of the Soviets in the "Chidlovsky Commission." This was an official enterprise—half governmental and half liberal—which tried in vain to resolve certain social problems on the eve of January, 1905, with the collaboration of official delegates representing workers. According to Miliukov, one of the delegates, an intellectual by the name of Nossar, together with other delegates, formed a "Soviet" on the fringes of the Commission—the

first Workers' Soviet—and Nossar became the moving spirit as well as president of this Soviet. This is vague. And more importantly, it is inaccurate. When Nossar appeared at the "Chidlovsky Commission," as we will show, *he was already a member*—and also president—*of the first Workers' Soviet, which was formed before this "Commission" and had no connections with it.* Similar errors have been made by other authors.

The Social-Democrats sometimes present themselves as the real instigators of the first Soviet.

The Bolsheviks often do their utmost to steal this honor from them.

All of them are wrong, being ignorant of the truth, which is very simple: not one party, not one permanent organization, not one "leader" gave birth to the idea of the first Soviet. *The Soviet rose spontaneously, as the result of a collective agreement, in the context of a small, casual, and completely private gathering.*[1]

The material the reader will find here has not been published before and constitutes one of the least expected chapters of the "Unknown Revolution." It is time to reconstitute the historical truth. This is made even more urgent by the fact that this truth is quite suggestive.

I hope the reader will excuse me for having to speak about myself. I was involuntarily involved in the birth of the first "Soviet of Workers' Delegates" which was formed in St. Petersburg, not at the end of 1905, but in *January-February* of that year.

Today I am probably the only person who can relate and date this historical episode, unless one of the workers who took part in the action at the time is still alive and able to tell the story.

I've wanted to narrate these facts on several previous occasions. Whenever I studied the newspapers—Russian as well

[1] Lenin, in his *Works*, and Bukharin, in his *ABC of Communism*, are perfectly right when they mention in passing that the "Soviets" were spontaneously formed by workers in 1905, but they fail to give details, and they give the impression that these workers were Bolsheviks, or at least "sympathizers."

as foreign—I always found the same gap: not one writer was able to tell exactly where, when and how the first workers' Soviet appeared in Russia. All that was known, all that has been known until today, is that this Soviet was born in St. Petersburg in 1905, and that its first president was a St. Petersburg legal clerk, Nossar, better known in the Soviet by the name of *Khrustalev. But where and how did the idea of this Soviet originate? Why was it launched? In what circumstances was it adopted and put into practice? How and why did Nossar become the president? Where did he come from, what party did he belong to? Who were the people in the first Soviet? What function did it serve?* All of these historically important questions remain unanswered.

We should emphasize that this gap is understandable. *The birth of the first Soviet was a completely private event. It took place in a very intimate atmosphere, beyond the reach of all publicity, outside of any far-reaching campaign or action.*

The reader can indirectly verify what I am saying. In the writings that treat this aspect of the Russian Revolution, the reader will find the name of *Nossar-Khrustalev,* mentioned almost incidentally. But he will also find something puzzling: no one ever says how or when this man appeared on the scene, why and in what circumstances he became president of the first Soviet. Socialist writers are visibly annoyed to have to speak of Nossar. They seem not to want to mention his name. Unable to be silent about this historical fact (which they would prefer), they mumble a few incomprehensible and imprecise words about Nossar and his role and then hasten to deal with the activity of the Soviets at the end of 1905, when Leon Trotsky became president of the St. Petersburg Soviet.

This discretion, this annoyance, and this haste can easily be understood. First of all, neither the historians nor the socialists (including Trotsky) nor the political parties in general *have ever known anything about the real origin of the Soviets,* and it is undoubtedly annoying to admit this. Secondly, even if the socialists learned the facts and wanted to take them into account, they would have to admit that they had absolutely nothing to do with this event and that all they did

was to take advantage of it much later. This is why, whether or not they know the truth, they will try in every way possible to glide over this fact and to paint a picture favorable to themselves.

What has kept me from narrating these facts until now[1] is above all a feeling of annoyance caused by the need to speak about myself. On the other hand, I have never had the occasion to write about the Soviets for the "general press," for which, furthermore, I don't write. As time passed I did not decide to end my silence about the origin of the Soviets, to fight against the errors and the legends, to unveil the truth.

However, one time, several years ago, disturbed by the pretentious allusions and lies in certain articles and journals, I visited M. Melgunov, publisher of a Russian historical journal in Paris. I offered him, purely for the purpose of documentation, a detailed account of the birth of the first Workers' Soviet. My offer led to nothing: first of all because the publisher refused to accept, a priori, my condition that nothing be changed in my text; secondly because I learned that his journal was far from being an impartial historical publication.

Obliged to speak of the Soviets, I narrate the facts as they unfolded. And if the press—historical or other—is interested, it can find the truth here.

In 1904 I was engaged in cultural and educational work among St. Petersburg workers. I carried out my project alone, following my own method. I did not belong to any political party, although I was intuitively revolutionary. I was only 22 years old, and I had just left the University.

Towards the end of the year, I was instructing more than a hundred workers.

Among my students there was a young woman who, together with her husband, belonged to one of Gapon's Work-

[1] I should mention one exception. I mentioned these facts in a brief study of the Russian Revolution, published by Sebastien Faure in the *Encyclopedie Anarchiste*, under the word "Revolution." Afterwards Faure published a book with the title *La veritable Revolution sociale*, where he reprinted some of the studies that had appeared in the encyclopedia, including mine. But since the "general public" does not read libertarian literature, the facts which were cited remained almost unknown.

ers' Sections." Until then I had heard almost nothing about Gapon or his "sections." One evening, my student took me along to our neighborhood "section," eager to interest me in this work and in its founder. That evening Gapon himself was to attend the meeting.

At that time the real role of Gapon had not yet been determined. Progressive workers did not have complete confidence in his project—because it was legal and emanated from the government—but they had their own interpretation of it. The somewhat mysterious behavior of the priest seemed to confirm their interpretation. They believed that under the protective shield of legality, Gapon was actually preparing a vast revolutionary movement. (This is one of the reasons why many workers later refused to believe that the man had been a police agent. Once this role was definitely exposed, some of the workers who had been Gapon's intimate friends committed suicide.)

At the end of December, I met Gapon.

His personality fascinated me. On his part, he seemed—or wanted to seem—interested in my educational work.

We agreed to see each other again and to talk at greater length, and for this purpose Gapon gave me his visiting card with his address.

A few days later the famous strike of the Putilov factory began. Soon after that, precisely on the evening of January 6, (1905) my student, filled with emotion, came to tell me that events were taking an extremely serious turn; that Gapon had set in motion an immense movement of the working masses of the capital; that he was visiting all the sections, haranguing the crowd and calling on them to gather on Sunday, January 9 in front of the Winter Palace to give a "petition" to the Tsar; that he had already written this petition and would read it and comment on it in our Section the following evening, January 7.

The news seemed highly unlikely to me. I decided to attend the Section the following evening, wanting to evaluate the situation on my own.

The following day I went to the Section. A large crowd gathered, filling the room and the street, in spite of the intense cold. The people were serious and silent. In addition to

the workers, there were people from various walks of life: intellectuals, students, soldiers, police agents, small neighborhood merchants. There were also many women. There were no guards *("service d'ordre")*.

I went into the room. People were waiting for "Father" Gapon to come any minute.

It was not long before he came. He quickly made his way to the platform, through a compact mass of people, all standing and pressed tightly against each other. There might have been a thousand people in the room.

The silence was impressive. Suddenly, without even taking off his enormous fur coat which he only unbuttoned, making his cassock and his priest's silver cross visible, removing his large winter hat with a brusque and determined gesture, and letting his long hair fall, Gapon read and explained the petition to this large crowd who, from the first words, listened attentively and trembled.

In spite of his extremely hoarse voice—he had been wearing himself out without pause for several days—his slow speech, almost solemn but at the same time warm and visibly sincere, went right to the heart of all these people who responded deliriously to all his pleadings and appeals.

The impression he made was unforgettable. One felt that something immense and decisive was going to happen. I remember that I trembled with extraordinary emotion during the entire harangue.

When he had barely finished, Gapon stepped down from the platform and left in a hurry, surrounded by a few loyal followers, inviting the crowd outside to listen while the petition was read again by one of his collaborators.

Separated from him by all these people, seeing that he was in a hurry, absorbed and worn out by a superhuman effort and also surrounded by friends, I did not try to approach him. Furthermore, this would have been pointless. I had understood that what my student had told me was true: an enormous movement of the masses, a movement of exceptional importance, was being launched.

I went to the Section once again on the following evening, January 8. I wanted to see what was happening. And mainly I wanted to come into contact with the masses, to

take part in their action, to give shape to my own conduct. Several of my students accompanied me.

What I found at the Section told me what I had to do.

First of all, I once again saw a crowd gathered in the street. I was told that inside a member of the Section was reading the "petition." I waited.

A few minutes later the door opened briskly. About a thousand people left the room. Another thousand rushed in. I went in with them.

As soon as the door was closed, a Gaponist worker sitting on the platform began to read the petition.

Alas! It was abominable. With a weak and monotonous voice, completely spiritless, without giving the slightest explanation or conclusion, the man mumbled the text in front of an attentive and anxious crowd. He finished his boring lecture in ten minutes. Then the room was emptied to receive another thousand people.

I had a brief consultation with my friends. We decided. I rushed toward the stage. Until that day I had never spoken in front of the masses. But I did not hesitate. It was absolutely necessary to change the manner of informing and educating the people.

I went up to the worker who was getting ready to do his duty once again. "You must really be tired," I told him. "Let me replace you . . ." He looked at me with surprise; he was disconcerted. It was the first time he had seen me. "Don't be afraid," I continued. "I'm Gapon's friend. Here's proof." And I showed him Gapon's visiting card. My friends supported my offer.

The man finally gave in. He got up, gave me the petition, and left the platform.

I began reading immediately, then continued by interpreting the document, emphasizing particularly the essential passages, the protests and demands, being particularly insistent about the certainty that the Tsar would refuse.

I read the petition several times, until very late into the night. I slept at the Section together with some friends, on top of tables pushed against each other.

The following morning—the famous January 9—I had to read the petition one or two more times. Then we went out

to the street. An enormous crowd waited for us there, ready to start out at the first sign. At 9 o'clock my friends and I lined up, arm in arm, in the first three rows, and, inviting the crowd to follow us, we set out toward the Palace. The crowd stirred and followed us in tight rows.

We obviously didn't reach either the square or the palace. Forced to cross the Neva, we ran into a wall of troops at the approaches to the so-called "Troisky" bridge. After a few ineffective warnings, the troops started to shoot. The second round was particularly murderous; the crowd stopped and dispersed, leaving about thirty dead and twice as many injured. It should be mentioned that many soldiers fired into the air; a number of windows in the upper stories of the houses facing the troops were shattered by the bullets.

A few days passed. The strike remained almost complete in St. Petersburg.

It should be emphasized that this enormous strike had broken out spontaneously. It was not launched by any political party, by any union apparatus (at that time there were none in Russia), or by any strike committee. On their own initiative and with a completely free impetus, the working masses left factories and yards. The political parties were not even able to take advantage of the movement by taking it over, as is their habit. They were completely bypassed.

Nevertheless, the workers soon confronted the question: What to do now?

Poverty knocked on the door of the strikers. It had to be confronted without delay. On the other hand, workers everywhere asked how they should and could continue the struggle. The "Sections," deprived of their leader, found themselves crippled and nearly powerless. The political parties gave no sign of life. Nevertheless an organ which would coordinate and lead the action was urgently needed.

I don't know how this problem was posed and solved in other parts of the capital. Perhaps some of the "Sections," were able to provide at least material aid to the strikers in their regions. As for the quarter where I lived, events took a specific turn. And as the reader will see, *they later led to a generalized action.*

Meetings of about forty workers of my neighborhood

took place in my house every day. The police left us alone for the time being. After the recent events the police maintained a mysterious neutrality. We took advantage of this neutrality. We looked for ways to act. We were on the verge of making some decisions. My students and I decided to put an end to our study group and individually join the political parties so as to be active. All of us considered the events to be the beginning of a revolution.

One evening, about eight days after January 9, someone knocked at the door of my room. I was alone. A young man came in: tall, with an open and sympathetic manner.

"You're so-and-so?" he asked. When I nodded, he continued:

"I've been looking for you for a long time. Finally yesterday I learned your address. I'm George Nossar, a legal clerk. I'll get to the reason for my visit. On January 8 I listened to your reading of the petition. I could see that you had many friends, many relations with workers' circles. And it seems that you don't belong to any political party."

"That's right."

"Well, I don't belong to a political party either; I don't trust them. But personally I'm a revolutionary, and I sympathize with the workers' movement. But I don't have any acquaintances among workers. On the other hand I have extensive contacts with circles of bourgeois liberals who oppose the regime. So I have an idea. I know that thousands of workers, their wives and children are suffering terribly because of the strike. On the other hand, I know some rich businessmen who would like nothing better than to help these miserable people. In short, I could collect fairly large sums for the strikers. But the problem is how to distribute them in an organized, fair and useful manner. I thought of you. Could you and some of the workers you know take charge of receiving the sums I can bring, and could you distribute them among the strikers and the families of the victims of January 9?"

I accepted right away. Among my friends there was a worker who had access to his boss's cart, which he could use to visit workers and distribute relief.

I got together with my friends the following evening. Nossar was there. He had already brought several thousand

roubles. Our action began right away.

After a while our days were completely taken up by this task. In the evening I accepted the necessary funds from Nossar, and prepared my schedule of visits. And the following morning, helped by my friends, I distributed the money to strikers. Nossar thus got acquainted with the workers who came to see me.

But the strike was ending. Every day some workers returned to work. At the same time, the funds were running out.

Then the serious question came up again: *What to do? How to continue the action? And what form could it take now?*

The prospect of separating for good, without trying to continue a common activity, seemed painful and senseless. The decision we had taken to individually join the party of our choice no longer satisfied us. We wanted something else.

Nossar regularly took part in our discussion.

One evening when there were several workers at my house, as usual—Nossar was there too—we had the idea of forming a permanent workers' organization: something like a committee, or a council, which would keep track of the sequence of events, would serve as a link among all the workers, would inform them about the situation and could, if necessary, be a rallying point for revolutionary workers.

I don't remember exactly how this idea came to us. But I think I remember that it was the workers themselves who suggested it.

The word *Soviet* which, in Russian, means precisely *council,* was pronounced for the first time with this specific meaning.

In short, this first council represented something like a *permanent social assembly of workers.*

The idea was adopted. Then and there it was decided how the "Soviet" was to be organized and how it was to function.

The project grew rapidly.

The decision was made to tell workers in all large factories about the new creation and to proceed, still informally, to the election of officers of the organization which was named, for the first time, a *council (Soviet) of Workers'*

Delegates.

Yet another question was asked: Who would direct the work of the Soviet? Who would head it and guide it?

The workers who were there unhesitatingly offered me this post.

Moved by the trust the workers expressed in me, I nevertheless turned down their offer. I told my friends: "You're *workers.* You want to create an organism that will deal with your interests as *workers.* Learn, then, from the very beginning, to deal with your problems *yourselves.* Don't commit your destiny to someone who is not one of you. Don't set new masters over yourselves; they'll end up by dominating and betraying you. I am convinced that in everything that has to do with your struggles and your liberation, only you yourselves will ever be able to reach real results. *For* you, *above* you, *in place* of you yourselves, no one will ever do anything. You should find your president, your secretary and the members of your administrative commission *from among yourselves.* If you need information or clarification on certain specific questions, in short if you need intellectual or moral advice which presupposes a certain amount of education, then you can turn to intellectuals, to educated people who should be happy, not to lead you as masters, but to give you their help without interfering in your organizations. They're obliged to give you this help because it's not your fault that you've been deprived of the necessary education. These intellectual friends could even attend your meetings—but only as consultants."

I added another objection: "How could I be a member of your organization, not being a worker? In what way could I get in?"

In answer to this last question, I was told that nothing was easier. A worker's card would be found for me, and I would take part in the organization under another name.

I protested vigorously against such a procedure. I considered it not only unworthy of me and of the workers, but also dangerous and ill-fated. "In a workers' movement everything should be straightforward, honest, sincere."

But in spite of my suggestions, my friends did not feel strong enough to do without a "guide." So they offered the

post of president to Nossar. Not having the same scruples I had, he accepted.

A few days later he was given a worker's card with the name of *Khrustalev,* factory delegate.

Soon the delegates of various St. Petersburg factories held their first meeting.

Nossar-Khrustalev was nominated.

He became president of the organization, a post which he held until his arrest.

The first Soviet was born.

Some time later the St. Petersburg Soviet was filled with delegates from other factories. Their number was considerable.

During several weeks the Soviet met fairly regularly, sometimes openly, sometimes secretly. It published a workers' information sheet: *News (Izvestia) from the Soviet of Workers' Delegates.* At the same time, it led the workers' movement of the capital. At one point, Nossar went to the previously-mentioned "Chidlovsky Commission" as delegate of this first Soviet. He left the Commission disillusioned.

Sometime later the first Soviet had to stop meeting almost altogether because of government persecution.

At the time of the revolutionary movement of *October,* 1905, the Soviet, completely reorganized, resumed its public meetings. It was only from this time on that its existence became generally known. This is what partly explains the widespread errors concerning its origin. No one could know what had happened in the privacy of a small room. Nossar probably did not tell anyone about it. (The reader will find a few words about his personal fate below.) In any case, as far as I know, he never revealed these facts publicly. As for the workers who took part in the affair, it is hardly likely that any of them had the idea of telling the press about it.[1]

The Social-Democratic Party succeeded in penetrating this Soviet and taking over an important post. The Social-Demo-

[1]Nossar had a wife, but I do not know what happened to her after these events. He also had a younger brother, Stefan, whom I met again later in prison. I subsequently lost sight of him. If these people are still alive they could confirm my account.

crat Trotsky, future Bolshevik Commissar, entered the Soviet and had himself nominated secretary. Afterwards, when Khrustalev-Nossar was arrested, Trotsky became president.

The example given by the workers of the capital in January, 1905, was followed by workers of several other cities. Workers' Soviets were formed here and there. Nevertheless, at that time their existence was temporary: they were quickly spotted and suppressed by local authorities.

On the other hand, as we have seen, the St. Petersburg Soviet continued to function over a long period. The central government, discredited after the events of January 9, and particularly after the major setbacks it underwent in its war against Japan, did not dare to touch it. For the time being it limited itself to the arrest of Nossar.

Furthermore, the January strike had come to an end because of its own lack of momentum. In the absence of a more extensive movement, the activity of the first Soviet was soon reduced to insignificant tasks.

The St. Petersburg Soviet was finally suppressed at the end of 1905. The Tsarist government got back on its feet, "liquidated" the last vestiges of the revolutionary movement of 1905, arrested Trotsky as well as hundreds of revolutionaries, and destroyed all the political organizations of the left.

The Soviet of St. Petersburg (which became Petrograd) reappeared at the time of the decisive revolution of February-March, 1917, when Soviets were formed in all the cities and major regions of the country.

CHAPTER 3
The Disastrous War; Victory of a Revolutionary Strike

The waves raised by the events of January 1905 were not to be calmed right away. This time the entire country had been jolted.

From Spring, 1905 on, the general situation of the Tsarist regime became increasingly untenable. The main reason was the bitter defeat experienced by Tsarist Russia in its war against Japan.

This war, which began in February, 1904, accompanied by a great deal of arrogance and carried out largely with the aim of stimulating nationalistic, patriotic, and monarchist feelings, was hopelessly lost. The Russian army and fleet were totally defeated.

Public opinion openly blamed the incompetence of the authorities and the degeneration of the regime for the failure. Not only masses of workers, but other strata as well, were rapidly seized by a growing anger and spirit of revolt. The effect of the defeats—which followed one another in rapid succession—was overwhelming. People could no longer contain their feelings: indignation knew no limits, and agitation became widespread.

The government, aware of its defeat, was silent.

Taking advantage of the situation, liberal and revolutionary circles began a violent campaign against the regime. Without asking for authorization, people practiced freedom of speech and of the press. It was a veritable conquest of "political freedoms." Journals of all tendencies, even revolutionary ones, appeared and were freely sold, without censorship or control. The government and the entire system were vigorously criticized.

Even timid liberals turned to action: they founded num-

erous professional unions: the "Union of Unions" (a type of Central Committee directing the activity of all the unions), the secret "Union of Liberation" (a political organization). They also rushed to formally organize a political party called the "Constitutional-Democratic Party." The government was constrained to tolerate all this, as it had already tolerated the January strike and the meetings of the Soviet.

Political assassinations followed each other at an accelerating rate.

Violent demonstrations, even serious uprisings, broke out in various cities. In some places people set up barricades.

In various provinces peasants rebelled, unleashing actual "jacqueries" (peasant revolts), burning castles, appropriating the land, chasing out or even assassinating the landowners. A *Union of Peasants* with a socialist program was formed.

The enemies of the regime were becoming too numerous and too audacious. And, above all, they were right.

The military defeat of the government and its distressing "moral" situation do not explain everything. But they do explain the fact that it lacked the most important means for opposing the movement: money. Negotiations taking place abroad, mainly in France, for the purpose of securing a loan, dragged on endlessly because of lack of confidence in the Tsarist regime.

During the summer of 1905 serious troubles developed in the army and the navy. The well known revolt and epic of the battleship *Prince Potemkin,* one of the major units of the navy in the Black Sea, was the outstanding episode. The last rampart of falling regimes—the armed forces—began to break.

This time the entire country began to turn more and more resolutely against Tsarism.

In August 1905, giving way to various pressures, the emperor finally decided to recognize, *post factum*—and, needless to say, hypocritically—certain "freedoms." He also promised to convene a representative National Assembly ("Duma") with very restricted rights and on the basis of extremely narrow electoral procedures. Bulygin, Minister of the Interior, was charged with preparing and carrying out this election. But this highly timid step, belated and manifestly hypocritical, satisfied no one. Agitation and rebellion continued and

this "Duma," called "Bulygin's Duma," was never formed. Bulygin was forced to "resign" (at the end of August), and was replaced by Witte, who had succeeded in convincing Nicholas II to accept more meaningful concessions.

Meanwhile, the inactivity and avowed impotence of the government encouraged the forces of opposition and the Revolution. From the beginning of October, people spoke of a general strike encompassing the entire country as the prelude to the final revolution.

This strike, which encompassed the entire country—an immense strike, unique in modern history—took place in mid-October. It was less spontaneous than the January strike. Long anticipated, prepared ahead of time, it was organized by the Soviet, the "Union of Unions," and mainly by numerous strike committees. Factories, yards, workshops, warehouses, banks, administrative offices, railroads and all other means of transportation, post offices and telegraph stations—everything, absolutely everything, stopped completely. The life of the country was suspended.

The government lost its footing and gave in. On October 17 (1905) the Tsar issued a manifesto—the well-known "Manifesto of October 17"—where he declared that he had solemnly decided to bestow on his "dear and faithful subjects" all political freedoms and to convene, as soon as possible, a type of representative council: the *"State Duma."* (The term *Duma* was borrowed from an earlier century when a Council of State or Chamber of Nobles *[Boyars]* was known as a *Dumaboyarskaya:* an institution called on to help the Tsar carry out his functions. Later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the term *Zemskaya Duma* was used for assemblies of representatives from different classes, assemblies comparable to the *Etats Generaux* of the ancient French monarchy. Finally, in the period we're dealing with, *"Gorodskaya Duma"* meant "City Council," "gorod" meaning "city." The word "duma" means "thought.") According to the Manifesto, this *Duma* was being summoned to help the government.

It was, in short, a nebulous promise of a vague constitutional regime. Some circles took it seriously. An "Octobrist" Party appeared almost right away, and declared that it would

accept, apply and defend the reforms announced by the Manifesto.

In actual fact, this act of the Tsar's government had two aims which had nothing to do with a "constitution":

1. To produce an effect abroad; to give the impression that the Revolution was over, that the government had regained mastery over the situation, and thus to influence public opinion, particularly the opinion of French financial circles, so as to revive the loan negotiations;

2. To deceive the masses, calm them, and bar the path toward Revolution.

These two goals were realized. The strike ended. the revolutionary elan was broken. The impression created abroad was completely favorable. It was seen that, in spite of everything, the government of the Tsar was still strong enough to quell the revolution. The loan was granted.

It should be obvious that the revolutionary parties were not duped by the venture. They saw the Manifesto as a simple political maneuver and immediately began to explain it to the working masses. The workers, moreover, were more than a little suspicious. They had ended the strike, to be sure, *as if* they had obtained satisfaction, *as if* they had confidence. But the fact that the strike ended was simply a sign that the Revolution lacked impetus and could not yet go further. There was no expression of real satisfaction. The population did not hasten to use its "new rights," being intuitively aware of their fraudulent character. This was quickly proved. In some cities, peaceful public demonstrations organized to celebrate "the victory" and the "new regime" promised by the Tsar were dispersed by the police and followed by Jewish pogroms—while the walls announced the Tsar's "Manifesto."

CHAPTER 4
Defeat of the Revolution; Evaluation of the Jolt

Toward the end of 1905, the French bourgeoisie decided in favor of the loan, and high finance granted it. This "blood transfusion" saved the moribund Tsarist regime.

In addition, the government succeeded in ending the war with a peace treaty which was not overly humiliating.

From that point on, reaction took up where it had left off. Dangling a beautiful future before the eyes of the people, it fought and encircled the revolution.

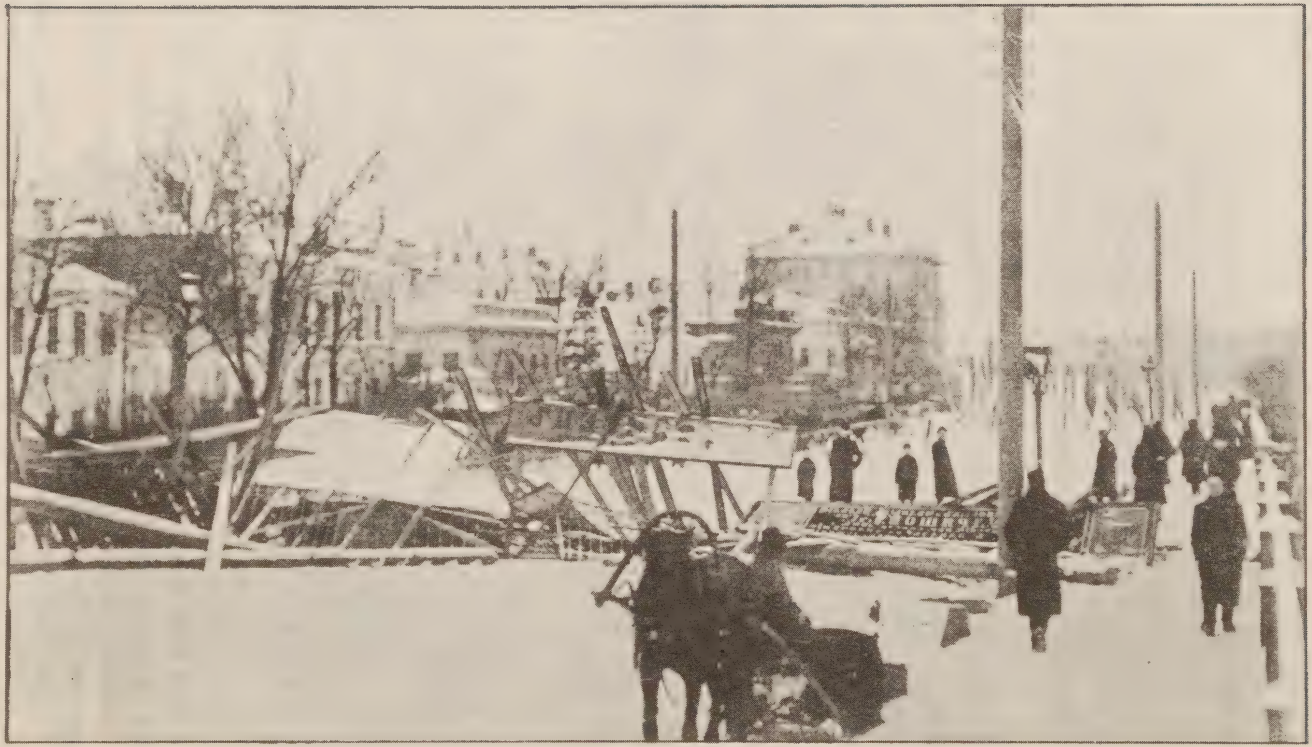
The Revolution would in any case have died on its own. The October strike was its supreme effort and its highest point. What it needed now was to take a "breath," to "pause." Furthermore, it could count on rebounding later on, perhaps under the stimulus given to it by a left-wing Duma.

In the meantime, the freedoms which had been taken by the people and then promised *post factum* by the Tsar in his Manifesto, were thoroughly suppressed. The government again made the revolutionary press illegal, re-established censorship, proceeded to make mass arrests, liquidated all workers' or revolutionary organizations within its reach, suppressed the Soviet, jailed Nossar and Trotsky, and dispatched troops for the purpose of purging regions where major uprisings had taken place and to inflict exemplary punishments. The military and the police were reinforced throughout.

But one thing remained which the government did not dare to touch: the Duma, which was about to convene.

Nevertheless, the Revolution made two more jumps, in response to the intractability of the reaction.

The first was a new revolt in the Black Sea fleet, under the leadership of Lieutenant Schmidt. The sedition was re-



December Days in Moscow (1905). Life continues amidst the barricades.

pressed and Schmidt was shot by a firing squad.

The second episode was an armed insurrection of Moscow workers in December, 1905. It held out against the government's forces for several days.

To put an end to it, the government brought in troops from St. Petersburg and even called in artillery units.

While this insurrection was taking place, attempts were made to provoke a new general strike throughout the country. If this strike had taken place the insurrection could have been victorious. But this time, even though the preliminary organization was similar to that of October, the necessary impetus was missing. The strike was not general. The postal service functioned, as well as the railways. The government was able to transport its troops and retained control over the situation everywhere. There was no doubt that the Revolution was out of breath.

Thus at the end of 1905 the tempest died down without having overthrown the obstacle.

But it did carry out an important, indispensable task: it swept and prepared the terrain. It left permanent marks in the life of the country and in the mentality of the population.

We can now examine the final "balance-sheet" of the jolt.

What do we find on the "credit side?"

Concretely there was, first of all, the *Duma.*

For the time being, the government was obliged to elaborate, for the Duma, an electoral law which was sufficiently broad to prevent excessively bitter or rapid disappointments. It did not yet feel completely secure; it, too, had to "breathe," to have a "pause."

The entire population expected a great deal from the Duma. The elections, set for the spring of 1906, called forth a feverish activity throughout the country. All the political parties took part in it.

The situation created by this state of affairs was paradoxical enough. While the parties of the left now spread their electoral propaganda openly and legally (the government could intervene only by making new regulations and by setting cunning traps), the prisons were crowded with members of the same parties, arrested at the time of the liquidation of the movement; speech and the press remained muzzled; work-

ers' organizations were still prohibited.

This is only superficially a paradox. It can easily be explained. This explanation will also help us understand how the government foresaw the functioning of the Duma.

In spite of the fact that it had to grant its subjects a certain amount of freedom because of the elections, the government obviously did not interpret the Duma as an institution summoned to turn against absolutism. In the government's view, the Duma was to be no more than an auxiliary organ, purely consultative and subordinate, good for helping the authorities in some of their tasks. Although it was obliged to tolerate a certain amount of electoral agitation by the left-wing parties, the government had decided earlier that it would only allow a certain amount and that it would react against any attempt by the parties, the voters or the Duma itself to take a defiant attitude. Since in the government's view the Duma had nothing to do with the Revolution, the government was perfectly logical when it kept the revolutionaries in prison.

Another concrete fact, completely new in Russian life, was precisely the formation and the legality—even if only up to a certain point—of different political parties.

Until the events of 1905, there were in Russia only two political parties, both clandestine and more revolutionary than literally "political." These were the Social-Democratic Party and the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

The Manifesto of October 17, the few freedoms which followed it with a view to the electoral campaign, and, above all, the campaign itself, suddenly gave rise to a whole brood of legal and semi-legal parties.

Inveterate monarchists created the "Union of Russian People": an ultra-reactionary and "pogromist" party whose "program" called for the suppression of all the "favors promised under the pressure of criminal uprisings," including the Duma; and the total elimination of the last traces of the events of 1905.

Less fiercely reactionary elements: the majority of higher functionaries, large industrialists, bankers, nobles, businessmen, landowners, gathered around the "Octobrist Party" (called the "Union of October 17") which we have already

mentioned.

The political weight of these two right wing parties was insignificant. They were the butt of jokes.

The majority of the rich and the middle classes, as well as intellectuals "of distinction," installed themselves in a large political party of the center, whose right wing was close to the "Octobrists," and whose left wing went so far as to express republican leanings. The program of the majority of the party called for a constitutional system putting an end to absolutism: the monarch would be retained, but his power would be seriously restricted. The party took the name "Constitutional Democratic Party" (abbreviated "Ca-Det Party.") It was also called the "People's Freedom Party." Its leaders were recruited mainly from among municipal big wigs, lawyers, doctors, people who practiced liberal professions, academics. Very influential and well placed, with access to considerable funds, this party engaged in extensive and energetic activity from the moment of its creation.

At the extreme left there were: the "Social-Democratic Party" (whose electoral activity, as we've already mentioned, was more or less open and legal, in spite of its bluntly republican program and its revolutionary tactics) and, finally, the "Socialist-Revolutionary Party" (except for its treatment of the agrarian problem, its program and tactics did not differ from those of the Social-Democratic Party) who, at the time of the Duma, and in order to be able to move freely, carried on electoral campaigns and presented candidates under the name of "Labor Party" (which subsequently became a separate party). It goes without saying that the last two parties represented mainly the masses of workers and peasants as well as the vast stratum of intellectual workers.

At this point we should furnish some details about the programs and ideologies of these parties.

Except for the political question, the most important point of the programs of all the parties was undoubtedly the *agrarian problem.* It urgently demanded an effective solution. The fact is that the peasant population had grown so rapidly that the plots of land granted to the emancipated peasants in 1861, inadequate already then, had been reduced, during a quarter of a century, as a result of continual division, to plots

of famine. "We don't even know where to let a chicken run any more," the peasants said. The immense population of the countryside waited with increasing impatience for a fair and effective solution to this problem. All the parties were aware of its importance.

For the time being, three solutions were presented, namely:

1. The Constitutional Democratic Party proposed an enlargement of the plots by a transfer of some of the lands of large private owners and of the State to the peasants; the peasants were to pay gradually for the transferred land, with State aid, on terms set by an official and "fair" evaluation.

2. The Social-Democratic Party proposed a transfer pure and simple, without payment, of the land needed by the peasants. The land would constitute a national fund and could be distributed according to needs ("nationalization" or "municipalization" of the land).

3. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party presented the most radical solution: immediate and complete confiscation of all land in the hands of private owners; immediate suppression of all landed property (private or state); placement of all the land at the disposal of peasant collectives, under the control of the State ("socialization" of the land).

Before doing anything else, the Duma had to deal with this urgent and complicated problem.

We would like to deal briefly with the *general ideology* of the two parties of the extreme left in this period (the Social-Democrats and the Socialist Revolutionaries).

Already around 1900 a major divergence of views manifested itself at the heart of the Russian Social-Democratic Party. Some of its members, clutching its "minimum program," held that the coming Russian revolution would be a bourgeois revolution, relatively moderate in its results. These socialists did not believe it possible to jump, in one leap, from a "feudal" monarchy to a socialist regime. A *bourgeois* democratic republic, paving the way for rapid capitalist development which would lay the foundations for a future socialism—this was their basic idea. A "social revolution" in Russia, was, in their opinion, impossible for the time being.

Many members of the party, however, had a different opinion. In their view, the next Revolution already had every chance of becoming a "Social Revolution," with all logical consequences. These socialists dropped the "minimum program" and prepared themselves for the conquest of power by the party and for the *immediate and decisive struggle against capitalism.*

The leaders of the first current were: Plekhanov, Martov, and others. The great creator of the second was Lenin.

The final split between these two camps took place in 1903, at the London Congress. The Social-Democrats with Leninist leanings had a majority. "Majority," in Russian, is "Bolshinstvo," and the partisans of this tendency were called *bolsheviki* (in English one would say "majoritarians"). Since "minority" is "menshinstvo," the others were called *"mensheviki"* (in English, "minoritarians"). As for the two tendencies themselves, the first acquired the name of *Bolshevism* (tendency of the majority), the other the name of *Menshevism* (tendency of the minority).

After their victory in 1917, the "Bolsheviks" called themselves the "Communist Party," whereas the "Mensheviks" alone retained the title "Social-Democratic Party." The Communist Party in power declared "Menshevism" counter-revolutionary and wiped it out.

As for the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, it also split into two distinct parties: a party of Socialist-Revolutionaries "of the right" who, like the "Mensheviks," insisted on the need to pass through a bourgeois democratic republic, and a party of Socialist-Revolutionaries "of the left" who claimed, like the Bolsheviks, that the Revolution should be pushed as far as possible, ultimately to the immediate suppression of the capitalist regime and the establishment of socialism (a type of social Republic).

(In 1917 the Bolsheviks in power wiped out the right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries as counter-revolutionaries. As for the left-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Bolshevik government at first collaborated with them. Later, when major disagreements arose between the two parties, the Bolsheviks broke with their former allies. Finally they outlawed and annihilated them.)

At the time of the 1905 revolution, the practical influence of these two dissident currents (Bolshevism and left-wing Revolutionary Socialism) was insignificant.

To complete our presentation of the diverse currents of ideas that made their appearance at the time of this revolution, we should point out that the Socialist-Revolutionary Party gave birth to a third tendency which, detaching itself from the Party, called for the suppression, during the revolution, not only of the bourgeois State, *but of the State in general* (as a political institution). This current of ideas was known in Russia by the name of *Maximalism,* because its partisans, having rejected the minimum program, broke with the left-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries and proclaimed the necessity of struggling immediately for the complete realization of the *maximum* program, namely for complete socialism, built on an apolitical foundation.

Thus the "Maximalists" did not form a political party. They created the "Union of Socialist Revolutionary Maximalists." This "union" published some pamphlets communicating its viewpoint. It also published a few periodicals, but these did not last long. It did not have many members, and its influence was negligible. It carried out mainly terrorist activities. But it did take part in all the revolutionary struggles, and many of its members died as real heroes.

By the totality of their ideas, the Maximalists were very close to anarchism. Maximalism did not in fact blindly follow the "Marxists;" it denied the usefulness of political parties; it vigorously criticized the State and political authority. Nevertheless, it did not dare to renounce political authority immediately and totally. It did not consider it possible to pass directly to a completely "anarchist" society. (Thus it made a distinction between "complete socialism" and anarchism.) For the intervening period it offered a "Workers' Republic" where elements of the State and of authority would be "reduced to a minimum" which, according to Maximalism, would assure their rapid extinction. This "provisional" retention of the State and of authority separated Maximalism from anarchism.

(Like all the currents of ideas which disagreed with Bolshevism, Maximalism was crushed by the Bolsheviks at the

time of the 1917 revolution.)

As for *anarchist* and *syndicalist* conceptions (we will examine these thoroughly at a later point in our study), in this period they were nearly unknown in Russia.

Outside of Russia many people believe that, since Bakunin and Kropotkin—these "fathers" of anarchism—were Russian, then Russia must for a long time have been a country with anarchist ideas and movements. This is a serious misconception. Both Bakunin (1814-1876) and Kropotkin (1842-1921) had become anarchists *abroad.* Neither of them had ever agitated in Russia as an anarchist. Their works had also appeared only abroad until the 1917 revolution, often in a foreign language. Only a few excerpts from their works, translated, adapted or published especially for Russia, were imported clandestinely to Russia, with great risk and in very small quantities. Furthermore, the distribution of these few publications in the interior of the country was nearly impossible. Finally, the entire social, socialist and revolutionary education of Russians had *absolutely nothing anarchist* about it, and but for a few exceptions, no one was interested in anarchist ideas.

Syndicalism was altogether unknown (a few erudite intellectuals excepted), since no workers' movement existed in Russia before the 1917 revolution. It can even be assumed that the Russian form of workers' organization, the "Soviet," was hurriedly discovered in 1905 and taken up again in 1917 precisely *because of the absence of a syndicalist conception and movement.* There is no doubt that if a union apparatus had existed, it would have led the workers' movement.

We have already mentioned that some small anarchist groups existed in St. Petersburg, in Moscow, in the West and the South. That was all. The Moscow anarchists did take an active part in the events of 1905 and attracted attention during the armed insurrection in December.

(After 1917 the Bolsheviks crushed the anarchist movement as they crushed all other movements that did not agree with theirs. But they did not crush it with ease. The struggle between Bolshevism and Anarchism during the course of the 1917 revolution—a tough, bitter struggle which is nevertheless almost completely unknown abroad, a struggle which

lasted more than three years and in which the "Makhnovist" movement was the outstanding episode—will be described in the last part of this work.)

Let us turn to the moral consequences, the *psychological effects,* of 1905. Their importance for the future was far greater than that of the few immediate concrete achievements.

First of all, as we've already pointed out, the "legend of the Tsar" disappeared. The *vast masses* became aware of the real nature of the regime and of the urgency of doing away with it. Absolutism and Tsarism were morally dethroned.

This is not all. The popular masses at last joined forces with all those who had for so long opposed this regime: the avant-garde intellectual circles, the left wing political parties, and revolutionaries in general. Solid and extensive contact was thus established between the progressive circles and the mass of the population. From now on this contact was going to spread, to deepen, to tighten. The "Russian paradox" had died.

Thus two capital achievements had been realized. On the one hand, there existed a *material* element on which an eventual revolution could "lean": this was the *Duma.* On the other hand, the *moral* obstacle which had barred the way to all extensive revolt, had broken down: *the masses finally understood the malady* and at last joined those in the front lines of the liberation struggle.

The ground was prepared for the next decisive revolution. This was on the "credit" side of the jolt of 1905.

Alas! The "liabilities" were just as heavy with consequences.

Unfortunately, the 1905 movement was not able to create a working class organization: neither a syndicalist organization or even a trade union. The right to organize was not won by the working masses. They remained without contact or organization.

The psychological consequence of this state of affairs was that it predisposed the working masses to become, in the next revolution, *the unconscious prize of political parties,* of their baneful rivalries, of their abominable struggle for power

in which the workers had nothing to gain, or rather, had everything to lose.

Thus the absence, on the eve of the Revolution, of a workers' movement and a real workers' organization opened all doors to the predominance—what am I saying?—the future domination of one or another *political party,* at the expense of the real action and the real cause *of the workers.*

The reader will in fact see later that the enormous weight of this "liability" was going to be fatal for the revolution of 1917: in the end it was going to crush the revolution.

We should still say something about the personal fate of Nossar-Khrustalev, first president of the first Workers' Soviet of St. Petersburg.

Arrested during the "liquidation" of the movement (at the end of 1905), Nossar was tried, convicted, and exiled to Siberia. He escaped and sought refuge abroad. But like Gapon, he was not able to adapt to a new life, and even less able to undertake regular work. He did not, to be sure, lead a life of debauchery; and he did not commit any act of treason. But he dragged out his life abroad in disorder, poverty and unhappiness.

This went on until the 1917 revolution. As soon as it broke out, he, like so many others, rushed back to his country and took part in revolutionary struggles. He did not, however, play an important role.

We do not know what happened to him after that. According to a source that we consider to be above suspicion, he ultimately turned against the Bolsheviks and was shot by them.

CHAPTER 5
The "Pause" (1905-1917)

The twelve years—exactly—which separate the real revolution from its first attempt, the "explosion" from the "jolt," did not add anything salient from a revolutionary point of view. On the contrary, reaction flourished all along the line. We should nevertheless take note of some major strikes and of a rebellion in the Baltic Fleet at Kronstadt which was savagely repressed.

The fate of the Duma was the outstanding event of this period.

The Duma began its sessions in May, 1906, in St. Petersburg. Immense popular enthusiasm accompanied these first sessions. In spite of all of the government's machinations, the Duma came out against the government. The Constitutional Democratic Party dominated it by the number of its members and the quality of its representatives. S. Muromtsev, professor at Moscow University and one of the party's most distinguished members, was elected president of the Assembly. Left-wing deputies—Social-Democrats and Socialist-Revolutionaries ("Laborites")—also formed an imposing bloc. The entire population followed the deliberations of the Duma with passionate interest. All hopes turned toward the Duma. People expected at least significant, effective and just reforms.

But from the very first contact, hostility—silent at first, but growing increasingly overt—developed between the "Parliament" and the government. The government treated the Duma patronizingly, with undisguised contempt. It hardly tolerated the Duma. It refused to accept the Duma, even as a purely consultative body. On the other hand, the Duma itself tried to impose itself as a legislative, constitutional body. Relations between them grew increasingly strained.

The people obviously sided with the Duma. The government's position became unfavorable, ridiculous, and even dangerous. Nevertheless it did not have to fear an imminent revolution. The government knew this. Furthermore, it could count on the army and the police. So the government undertook a decisive measure. The new energetic minister, Stolypin, was put in charge. He used a projected "Appeal to the People," prepared by the Duma and having to do mainly with the agrarian project, as his pretext.

One morning the "deputies" found the doors of the Duma closed and guarded by troops. Army and police paraded in the streets. The Duma—known as the "first Duma"—was dissolved. An official decree announced and "explained" this action to the population. This happened in the summer of 1906.

Except for a long series of assassinations and a few isolated revolts, the most important being those of Sveaborg and Kronstadt (the second in a short period of time, the first having taken place in October, 1905), the country remained calm.

The deputies themselves did not dare to resist effectively. This fact can easily be explained. Resisting would mean turning to revolutionary action. But everywhere it was felt that, for the present, the revolution was powerless. (Furthermore, if this had not been the situation the government would not have dared to dissolve the Duma, particularly in this insolent manner. The government felt genuinely powerful and, at least for the time being, it was not mistaken.) The bourgeoisie was far too weak to dream of a revolution favorable to its interests. As for the working masses and their parties, at this point they did not feel ready to undertake a revolution.

Consequently the deputies submitted to the dissolution. The decree, furthermore, did not suppress the Duma, but announced new elections in the near future, based on somewhat modified rules. The "representatives of the people" limited themselves to launching a note of protest against this arbitrary act. To prepare this note in complete freedom, the ex-deputies—mainly the members of the Constitutional Democratic Party—met in Finland (where they were protected by a certain independence of legislation in this part of the

Russian empire), in the city of Vyborg, which is why the note was baptized the "Vyborg Appeal." Afterward they calmly returned home.

In spite of the innocuous character of their "revolt," they were nevertheless tried and convicted some time later by a special court and given light sentences. (They did, nevertheless, lose the right to be re-elected to the Duma.)

Only one deputy, a young peasant from the Department of Stavropol, the "Laborite" Onipko, did not resign. It was he who stimulated the uprising in Kronstadt. Seized on the spot, he was almost shot by a firing squad. Certain interventions and fears saved him. He was finally tried and sentenced to exile in Siberia. He succeeded in escaping and found refuge abroad. He returned to Russia in 1917. What happened to him later is unknown. According to some very reliable sources, he continued to struggle as a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party of the right, turned against the Bolsheviks and was shot by them.

Immediately after the dissolution of the "first Duma," the government revamped the electoral law, unscrupulously had recourse to other preventive measures and maneuvers, and summoned the "second Duma." Much more moderate in its gestures and significantly more mediocre than the first, this Duma was still "too revolutionary" for the government. It is true that, despite all the machinations, it still had numerous left-wing deputies. This Duma was in turn dissolved. This time the electoral law was significantly modified. Furthermore, the population soon lost all interest in the activity—or rather the inactivity—of the Duma, except for rare moments when an exciting event or a stirring debate briefly attracted their attention.

The dissolution of the second Duma led to a third and finally a fourth Duma. This last Duma—a completely docile instrument in the hands of the reactionary government—was able to drag out its bleak and sterile existence until the revolution of 1917.

As for reforms or useful laws, the Duma accomplished nothing at all. But its presence was not completely useless. The critical speeches of some opposition deputies, the position of Tsarism in the face of the burning problems of the

The Duma thinks in the Finnish woods.

hour, the very impotence of the "Parliament" to deal with these problems so long as the absolutist regime remained intact, all these facts continued to enlighten the vast masses of the population about the real nature of the regime, about the role of the bourgeoisie, about the tasks to be accomplished, about the programs of the political parties. For the Russian population this period was, in short, a long and fertile "experimental lesson," the only one possible in the absence of other means of political and social education.

Two parallel processes were the main characteristics of the period in question: on one side, the accelerated and definitive degeneration—"decay" would be a better word—of the absolutist regime; on the other, the rapid growth of the consciousness of the masses.

The unquestionable signs of the degeneration of Tsarism were known abroad. The attitude and life-style of the Imperial Court were typical of those which generally preceded the fall of monarchies. The incompetence and indifference of Nicholas II, the cretinism and corruption of his ministers and functionaries, the vulgar mysticism which took hold of the "monarch" and his family (the well known episode of the priest Rasputin)—this ensemble of elements was not a secret to anyone abroad.

What was not as well known were the profound changes taking place in the psychology of the popular masses. Nevertheless, the spiritual condition of a man of the people in 1912, for example, no longer had anything in common with the primitive outlook of the same man before 1905. Increasingly vast layers of the population were becoming straightforwardly anti-Tsarist. Only the savage reaction, which prohibited all organization of workers and all political or social propaganda, kept the masses from giving a final shape to their ideas.

Thus the absence of striking revolutionary events does not in any way mean that the revolutionary process had stopped. It continued with undiminished intensity, under the surface, especially in people's thoughts and feelings.

In the meantime, all the vital problems remained suspended. The country had reached an impasse. *A violent and decisive revolution became inevitable.* Only the impetus and

the weapons were missing.

It was in these conditions that the war of 1914 broke out. This war gave the masses the necessary impetus as well as the indispensable weapons.

PART III

THE EXPLOSION (1917)

CHAPTER 1
War and Revolution

LIKE THE governments of other countries, that of Tsar Nikolai II succeeded in arousing, at the beginning of the European war in 1914, the whole gamut of evil instincts, animal passions, and wicked sentiments such as nationalism and chauvinism.

In Russia, as in those other lands, millions of men were duped, hypnotised, disoriented, and compelled to rush to the battle front like a herd of cattle to a slaughter-house, while the real problems of the hour were forgotten. And the few early "successes" attained by the Tsarist troops further kindled "the great enthusiasm of the people".

Nevertheless a special note was blended in this artificial and directed concert, an idea deeply implanted in the spirit was hiding behind this "enthusiasm". Very well—the Army and nearly all the civilians reasoned—we will fight and win. But the Government would better not deceive itself. When the war is over, we will present our bill. In return for our devotion and sacrifices, we expect a complete change in the régime. We will regain our rights, our liberties. Things will be different after the war.

And the soldiers whispered: "When the war is over we will keep our guns, at all costs".

But soon enough the situation in Russia was altered. A series of defeats began, and with them the unrest, the disillusionment, the rage of the people returned.

The war cost dearly, frightfully, in money and especially in men. Millions of human lives were sacrificed, to no purpose and with no compensation. Once more the Romanov régime demonstrated its incompetence, its rottenness, its weakness. Moreover, certain defeats which cost hugely in victims were unexplained, mysterious, suspect. All over the country there was talk, not only of flagrant incompetence, but of criminal negligence, venality of the

authorities, espionage in the supreme command, the German origin of the dynasty and of several leaders, and of high treason in the Imperial Court itself. Members of the royal family were almost openly accused of sympathy for the Germans, and even of having direct dealings with the enemy. With little secrecy, and with anger and hatred, the Tsarina was called "the *Boche*". Alarming and sinister rumours spread among the masses.

At first the Imperial Court was not much disturbed. Later several measures were taken—tardily and awkwardly. Being purely formal, they were ineffective, satisfied no one, accomplished nothing.

In an attempt to restore the morale of the troops and the people, Nikolai II personally assumed supreme command of the fighting forces, at least nominally. He went to the front. But this gesture did not change anything in the general situation, which was getting worse each day, and against which the Tsar, absolutely incapable and inactive, was powerless. Everywhere there was disintegration, both in the Army and in the country at large.

In despair, several plots were fomented in liberal circles and even in the immediate entourage of the Tsar. One design of the plotters was to make the ruler abdicate in favour of a more "up to date" and popular monarch, for instance the Tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Nikolai, "to save the war and the dynasty", the impending fall of which was expected by all concerned.

They began by wiping out the evil monk Rasputin. But the conspirators hesitated about what to do next, and delayed, not being able to reach an agreement among themselves.

Things were at this stage when, brutally, the explosion in February, 1917, occurred.

It was not so much the military developments, nor the rumours of treason in the Royal Court, nor even the incompetence and unpopularity of the Tsar that set off this sudden detonation.

What made the people desperate and brought on the crucial blow was *the complete disorganization of economic life, and of existence itself, throughout the country.* "The disorganization is such," Minister Krivochein admitted, speaking of the administration and all the services of the State, "that it is like a lunatic asylum." And it was in this field that the impotence of the Tsarist

government and the disastrous results of its conduct compelled the masses to take decisive action.

All the warring nations were suffering great economic and financial difficulties at this stage of the European conflict, because of the necessity of feeding and supplying the other needs of the millions of men on the far-flung battle-fronts, and at the same time maintaining the normal life of those countries. Everywhere this double task caused tremendous strain. But everywhere else—even in Germany, where the situation was especially difficult—it was accomplished more or less successfully. Everywhere except in Russia, where nothing had been foreseen, nothing planned in advance, nothing organized.[1]

It must be added that the terrible effects of this total disintegration of power and the State would have manifested themselves even sooner, had it not been for the efforts of certain living forces in the empire, such as the Union of the Cities, the War Industries Committee, and others. Arising spontaneously, these organizations were able to provide to a considerable degree for the more pressing needs of the Army and the civilian populace.

The energetic and beneficial activity of these forces, as well as that of the *zemstvos* (provincial councils), the municipalities, et cetera,—an activity which, we must emphasize, was carried on in opposition to the laws and resistance of the bureaucracy—also had a highly important *moral* effect. Every day, alike in the Army and in the country at large, one could clearly perceive, not only the total incompetence of Tsarism, but also *the existence of elements perfectly capable of replacing it,* and furthermore, the disgraceful way in which the dying Romanov régime, fearing those elements, impeded their action, thus pushing the whole nation toward catastrophe.

Every day the Army and the Russian people saw with their own eyes that it was these free unions and committees which, on

[1] The reader should not be surprised at this weakness. He must realize that in Russia then the bourgeoisie—weak, disorganized, and wholly dependent on the State—had no initiative, no real strength, and could play no organizing rôle in the national economy; that the industrial workers and the peasants—serfs, with no voice nor rights—were less than nothing in the empire's economic life and cared nothing for the Tsarist State; and that thus the whole mechanism, political, economic, and social, was in the hands of Tsarist functionaries. Once the war had disrupted this class and upset its obsolete machinery, everything went to pieces.

their own initiative and with sublime devotion, assured production, organized transport, supervised supplies, and guaranteed arrival and distribution of rations and munitions. And every day, too, the Army and the people saw the government oppose this indispensable activity and hold it back, with no concern for the interests of the country.

This final moral preparation of the Army and the populace for the downfall of Tsarism and its replacement by other elements was exceedingly important. It completed the pre-revolutionary process. It gave the last touch to the preparatory work.

In January, 1917, the situation had become untenable. The economic chaos, the poverty of the workers, and the social disorganization of Russia were so acute that the inhabitants of several large cities—notably Petrograd—began to lack not only fuel, clothing, meat, butter, and sugar, but even bread.

February saw worse conditions. Despite the efforts of the Duma, the *zemstvos* (provincial councils), the municipalities, the unions, and the committees, not only was the urban population doomed to famine, but the supplying of the Army became entirely defective. And at the same time a complete military debacle was reached.

By the end of February, *it was absolutely impossible for the country, both materially and morally, to continue the war.* And it was impossible for the industrial workers in the cities to procure supplies [to keep the factories going].

But Tsarism did not want to know anything about these realities. It persisted blindly now in running the old machine completely off its tracks. And it fell back, as usual, on repression, violence against those who were active, and the militants of the political parties.

It was the inability of the people to continue the war and endure conditions of famine, on the one hand, and the blind obstinacy of Tsarism, on the other, that brought about the Revolution, two and a half years after "the great enthusiasm".

On February 24 (Russian old style) disturbances began in Petrograd. Primarily provoked by the lack of provisions, they did not seem likely to become serious. But next day events took a sudden turn. The workers in the capital, feeling that the Russian

people generally were in solidarity with them, extremely agitated for weeks, starving, and not even receiving any more bread, thronged the streets, demonstrated fiercely, and flatly refused to disperse.

Yet on this first day the demonstrations were cautious and inoffensive. In close-packed masses the workers, with their wives and children, shouted: "Bread! Bread! We have nothing to eat. Either give us bread or shoot us! Our children are dying of hunger. Bread! Bread!"

Besides the police, the Government sent detachments of mounted troops, Cossacks, against the demonstrators. But there were few troops then in Petrograd—except unreliable reservists. So the workers were not at all frightened. They bared their breasts to the soldiers, held up their children, and cried: "Kill us all if you dare! Better to be shot than to starve to death!"

Finally—and this was the key point of the episode—nearly all of the soldiers, smiling, walked warily towards the crowd, without using their weapons, and ignoring the orders of their officers. And many of the latter were not particularly insistent. In some places the soldiers fraternized with the workers, going so far as to give them their rifles, getting off their horses, and mingling with the throng. Naturally this attitude of the troops encouraged the protesting workers.

Here and there, however, the police and the Cossacks *did* charge groups of demonstrators carrying red flags, and several of them were killed or wounded.

In the barracks of Petrograd and the suburbs of the capital, the garrison regiments still held back from taking the side of the Revolution. And the government held back from sending them to combat it.

But the morning of February 26 brought a notable new happening. By decree, the Government ordered the Duma dissolved.

This was a sort of signal that everybody seemed to have been waiting for before beginning decisive action. The news, known everywhere in the capital almost instantaneously, spurred on events. From that moment, the demonstrations took on the character of a strictly revolutionary movement.

Shouts of *"Down with Tsarism!"*, *"Down with the War!"*, and

In front of the Tauride Palace, March 14, 1917. " 'Long live the revolution' rang from the milling crowd, whose attitude steadily became more determined and menacing."

"*Long live the Revolution!*" rang from the milling crowd, whose attitude steadily became more determined and menacing. All over the city the demonstrators resolutely attacked the police. Several public buildings were burned, including the Court House. The streets bristled with barricades. Soon many red flags appeared. The soldiers still maintained a benevolent neutrality, but more and more frequently they mingled with the throng. The Government could depend on its troops less and less.

Now it hurled the whole police force of the city against the rebels. The police quickly formed detachments for mass attack. They installed machine-guns on the roofs of various houses and even in some churches, and occupied all strategic points. Then they began a general offensive against the rising masses.

During that whole day of February 26 the fighting was hot. In many instances the police were dislodged, policemen were killed, and their machine-guns silenced. But elsewhere they resisted fiercely.

Tsar Nikolai II, who was at the war-front, was warned by telegram of the gravity of the situation. *Meanwhile the Duma decided to continue sitting and not yield to the order to dissolve.*

CHAPTER 2
Triumph of the Revolution

THE DECISIVE action occurred on February 27, 1917.

From early morning, whole regiments of the Petrograd garrison, no longer hesitant, mutinied, left their barracks, arms in hand, and took over certain strategic points in the capital, after brief skirmishes with the police. The Revolution gained ground.

At a given moment, a dense mass of demonstrators, defiant and grimly threatening, and partially armed, assembled in Znamenskaya Square and in the vicinity of the Nikolaievsky railway station. The Government sent two cavalry regiments from the Imperial Guard, the soldiers it still could trust, as well as a strong detachment of police, both on foot and mounted. The troops were supposed to support and assist the police.

After the usual summons [warning the demonstrators to disperse], the police commander gave an order to charge the crowd. But now another last-moment "miracle" occurred. The officer commanding the Guard cavalrymen raised his sabre, and with a cry of "Charge the police!" launched his two regiments against them. In almost no time the latter were beaten, thrown back. overwhelmed.

Soon the last resistance of the police was broken. The revolutionary troops seized the Government arsenal and occupied all vital points in the city. Surrounded by a delirious multitude, the regiments drew themselves up, with flags unfurled, before the Tauride palace, where the Duma—the poor Fourth Duma—was sitting, and put themselves at its disposal.

Shortly afterward the last regiments of the garrison of Petrograd and its suburbs joined the movement. Tsarism had no more armed forces in the vicinity of the capital. The population was free. The Revolution had triumphed.

The events which presently followed are well known.

A provisional government, composed of influential members of the Duma, was formed and ardently acclaimed by the people.

The provinces enthusiastically joined the Revolution.

Some troops were hastily withdrawn from the front, and were sent by order of the Tsar to the rebel-held capital, but were unable to reach it. For the railroad workers refused to transport them further when they drew near the city. Then the soldiers refused to obey their officers and went over to the Revolution. Some returned to the front; others simply dispersed.

Tsar Nikolai himself, returning to Petrograd by railroad, had his train stopped at Dno station and then had it take him back to Pskov. There he was joined by a delegation from the Duma and by military personages who had joined the Revolution. He could do nothing but accept the situation. After some trifling negotiations he signed his abdication, for himself and his son Alexis This on March 2.

For a moment, the provisional government sought to present the throne to the ex-Emperor's brother, Grand Duke Michael But he declined the offer, declaring that the fate of the country and the dynasty should be put into the hands of a regularly convoked Constituent Assembly.

The front hailed the accomplished Revolution.

Tsarism had fallen. Formation of the Constituent Assembly was the order of the day. While waiting for it to be called, the provisional government became the official authority—"recognized and responsible". The first act of the victorious Revolution was over.

We have recounted the facts of this February revolution in some detail in order to bring out in relief the main point:

Once more, *the action of the masses was spontaneous, logically climaxing a long period of concrete experience and moral preparation. This action was neither organized nor guided by any political party. Supported by the people in arms—the Army—it was victorious.* The element of organization had to be introduced—and was introduced—immediately afterward.

(In any case, because of the repression, all of the central organizations of the political parties of the left, as well as their leaders, were, at the time of the Revolution, far from Russia.

Martov of the Social Democratic Party, Tchernoff of the Social Revolutionary Party, Lenin, Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Losovsky, Rykov, Bukharin, *et al.*, were all living abroad. It was not until after the February Revolution that they returned home).

Another significant point also emerges from these events.

Again, *immediate and specific impetus was given to the Revolution by the absolute impossibility of Russia continuing the war*—an impossibility which naturally was intensified by the obstinacy of the Government. This impossibility resulted from the inextricable chaos into which the war had plunged the nation.

CHAPTER 3
Toward the Social Revolution

The provisional government formed by the Duma was of course strictly bourgeois and conservative. Its members, Prince Lvov, Gutchkov, Milioukov, and others (with the exception of Kerensky, who was vaguely Socialist) nearly all belonged politically to the Constitutional Democratic party; socially to the privileged classes. For them, once absolutism was overthrown, the Revolution was over. In reality it had only begun.

Now, they wanted to "re-establish order", ameliorate little by little the general situation in the country and at the battle-front, "push" the war more actively than ever, inspire it with new spirit, and especially prepare peacefully for the calling of the Constituent Assembly, which would establish the new fundamental laws of the nation, the new political régime, and the new form of government. Henceforth the people had only to wait patiently and prudently, like the good children that they were, for the favours which these new masters would grant them.

These new masters, the members of the provisional government, naturally saw themselves as good moderate bourgeoisie, who would use their powers like those in other "civilized" countries. And the political outlook of that régime did not go beyond a nice constitutional monarchy. At most some of its members perhaps timidly envisaged a very moderate bourgeois republic. The agrarian question, the question of the workers, et cetera, would be resolved by the *future* established government, in the manner of the "proven" western models.

In the last analysis, the provisional government was more or less sure of being able to utilize the preparatory period for stalling, if need be, and for restoring the masses to calmness, discipline, and obedience, in case they should evidence too violently their desire to go beyond the limits thus proclaimed. It finally occupied itself with assuring, by behind-the-scenes manœuvring, a "normal"

Photo of the state prison in Petrograd which had been set afire after its inmates had been freed. 1917.

election, which would result, at the desired moment, in a prudent and upright Constituent Assembly—bourgeois, of course.

At this point it is pleasant to state that the "realists", the "established" politicians, the scholars, the economists, and the sociologists, were wrong in their calculations. *The reality completely escaped them.*

I recall attending, in New York, in April or May, 1917, a Russian lecture by an honorable professor who made an elaborate analysis of the composition and probable actions of the forthcoming Constituent Assembly. And I asked the respectable professor a single question: "What do you foresee in case the Russian Revolution goes beyond the Constituent Assembly?"

Disdainfully enough, and ironically, the eminent lecturer said, as his only reply, that he was a "realist" and that his heckler was "surely an Anarchist, whose fantastic hypothesis is of no interest to me." But the future soon demonstrated that the learned professor had masterfully deceived himself and that he himself was the "fantastic" one. In his two-hour speech he had neglected to analyze only one eventuality: *that which actually took place a few months later.*

Here I would like to add some personal reflections.

In 1917 the realists, the men of politics, the writers, the professors, both Russian and foreign, had, with few exceptions, superciliously and scornfully failed to predict the triumph of Bolshevism in the Russian Revolution. In our time, since triumphant Bolshevism is, and has been for a short period, historically speaking, an accomplished fact, many of those gentlemen are willing to recognize it, to take an interest in it, and concern themselves with it. They even recognize—again deceiving themselves masterfully—its "great positive importance" and "its complete world-wide triumph".

I am absolutely sure that, with the same "realism" and "clairvoyance", the same arrogance before and the same assurance afterward, these same gentlemen will fail to predict in time, only to accept it after it happens—*the real and complete triumph of the libertarian idea in the world-wide Social Revolution.*

That first provisional government certainly did not take

account of the obstacles which confronted it. The most serious obstacle was the nature of the problems with which it had to deal before the calling of the Constituent Assembly. (And it never occurred to the Government leaders that the workers might not want to wait for the forming of the Assembly and that they were wholly within their rights [in taking that position].

First, *the problem of the war.*

Disillusioned and exhausted, the people continued that war against their will, or at the most, with utter apathy. For the Army was undeniably beaten, both physically and morally. On the one hand, the miserable conditions of the country, and on the other, the Revolution, had definitely upset it.

Two solutions were possible: to end the war, conclude a separate peace, demobilize the Army, and be concerned solely with domestic problems—or attempt the impossible task of maintaining the battle-front, restoring discipline, "reviving" the morale of the Army, and continuing the war at any cost, at least until the Constituent Assembly was called.

Obviously the first solution was unacceptable to a "patriotic' bourgeois government, allied to other belligerents and considering it a "national disgrace" to break that alliance. Furthermore, in as much as the Government was "provisional" it felt obliged to follow the [conventional] formula: "No important changes before the Constituent Assembly is called; it will have full right to make any decisions."

So the provisional government adopted the second solution But under the existing circumstances this was unrealizable.

This point must be insisted on, for generally it is not given enough emphasis.

The machine called the "bourgeois State" broke down in Russia in February, 1917. Its purpose and its activity had always been contrary to the interests and aspirations of the people. Since the latter, for the moment, had become masters of their own destinies, it could not be repaired and put back into working order. *For it is the people who make such a machine run*—whether under compulsion or freely—and not the governments. The broken apparatus could neither exercise nor re-establish rule by force. And the people no longer "marched" voluntarily toward goals that were not their own.

Hence it was necessary to replace the disabled apparatus with another one, adapted to the new situation, instead of losing time and strength in vain efforts to get it running again.

The bourgeois and nationalist government couldn't understand this. It insisted on maintaining both the "machine" and the evil heritage of the fallen régime, the war. On this account it was making itself increasingly unpopular. And with the machine [the bourgeois State] broken, it was powerless to go ahead, to impose its war-like will.

This first problem of the hour, the most serious, the most immediate, was thus inevitably condemned to remain unsolved by the provisional government.

The second thorny problem was *the agrarian question.*

Russia's peasants—who made up 85 per cent. of the population—aspired to possess the land. The Revolution gave these aspirations an irresistible force. Having been reduced to impotence, exploited, and duped for centuries, the peasant masses no longer would pay attention to anything else. *They needed the land, at all costs, and immediately, without protocol or ceremony.*

Neither physically nor morally could Russia continue the war. Refusal of the Tsarist government to recognize that fact was the immediate cause of the Revolution. And so long as this impossibility continued, any government which failed to recognize it would, logically, fall like that of the Tsar.

To be sure, the provisional government hoped to be able to alter the situation, to end the chaos, reorganize the country, give it new energy. But these were illusions; neither the available time nor the state of mind of the masses would permit it.

BACK IN 1905, at the Peasant Congress called shortly after the Manifesto of October 17 (while the "liberties" still existed), in preparation for the calling of the Duma, numerous delegates had acted as spokesmen for the aspirations [of the rural masses].

"Any mention of redemption of the land revolts me," one of those peasant delegates declared. "They propose that we reimburse the enslavers of yesterday, who, even in our own day, aided by the functionaries, have made our life into an obstacle course. Haven't we already reimbursed them sufficiently by paying rent? It is impossible to measure the barrels of blood with which we have watered the soil. And that's not all; with their own milk, our

grandmothers nursed the hunting dogs of these gentlemen. Isn't that redemption?

"For centuries we have been grains of sand blown by the wind. And they were the wind. And now we have to pay again? Oh, no. There is no need for diplomatic discussion. There is only one just way—the revolutionary way. Otherwise they will fool us once more. Anything that speaks of 'redemption' is a compromise. Comrades, don't repeat the error of your fathers. In 1861 they [the enslavers] were cleverer than we, and they had us; they gave us only a little because the people did not take everything."

"We never sold them the land," peasants from the Orel region protested. "Therefore we don't have to redeem it. Already we have paid enough by working for an inhumanly low wage. No, in no case will we pay a redemption. My Lord didn't get the land from the moon; his grandparents seized it."

"Redemption would be a flagrant injustice to the people," delegates from the Kazan district averred. "The people ought to receive a receipted bill of sale with the land. For, in fact, these gentlemen never bought that land. They confiscated it, to sell it later."

And other peasants told the eminent savant N[ikolai?] Rubakin, sometime between 1897 and 1906: "All these gentlemen—Orlov, Demidoff, Balachoff—got their land free from the Tsars and Tsarinas as presents. And now they want us to redeem it at such prices? That is not only injustice, it is open robbery."

This explains why the peasants did not want to wait any longer [in 1917]. Nearly everywhere they were forthrightly expropriating the land, driving out any landlords who had not already fled. Thus they had solved the "agrarian question" in their own way and by themselves, without bothering about deliberations, machinations, and the decisions of the Government or the Constituent Assembly. And the Army, composed primarily of peasants, certainly was ready to support this direct action.

The provisional government was undecided whether to accept the situation or to resist it—that is to struggle against the revolting peasants, and also, almost inevitably, against the Army as well. So naturally it adopted the tactic of waiting, hoping, as with the

problem of war, to be able to arrange things by manœuvring intelligently and skilfully. The Government spokesmen adjured the peasants to wait patiently for the Constituent Assembly, which, they said, would have the right to establish all law, and certainly would give full satisfaction to the peasants. But nothing came of this. These appeals were for the most part futile, and this tactic had no chance of success. For the peasants did not have the least confidence in the words of the "gentlemen" in power. They had been fooled often enough! And they felt strong enough now to *take* the land. To them this was only justice. If sometimes they hesitated again, it was only out of fear of being punished for the acts they were committing.

Too, *the problem of the industrial workers* was as insoluble by a bourgeois government as that of the peasants. The masses of those workers sought to obtain from the Revolution a maximum of well-being and of [the establishment of] rights to a minimum. Immediate and very serious struggles were foreseeable in this field of conflict. And by what means was the provisional government going to maintain its position?

Also *the purely economic problem* was exceedingly difficult, because it was closely related to the other problems, on the one hand, and moreover, coping with it could not be delayed. In the midst of war and revolution, with a chaotic situation in a disrupted country, it was necessary to organize production anew, as well as transportation, exchanges, finance, et cetera.

There remained, finally, *the political problem.* Under the existing circumstances there was no valid solution for it. The provisional government had of course assumed the task of calling the Constituent Assembly in the near future. But for a thousand reasons [attainment of] this task could not succeed. Above all, the government *dreaded* the opening of that Assembly. Contrary to its promises, its fondest hope was to postpone the Assembly as long as possible, and meanwhile it would seek the installation, through some fortunate turn of luck, of a "constitutional" monarchy. But presently other perilous obstacles arose.

The most serious was *the resurrection of the workers' soviets,* notably the Petrograd Soviet. This had been re-established in the very first days of the Revolution—by tradition, and also as in 1905, in default of other workers' organizations. True, at that moment

the industrial workers were under the influence of the moderate Socialists, Mensheviks, and right Social Revolutionaries. But, all the same, their ideology and programme was absolutely contrary to the project of the provisional government, and naturally the moral influence and activity of the Petrograd Soviet soon began to conflict with that of the Government, to the detriment of the latter.

The Petrograd Soviet was a sort of second government for the country. It set the tone of all the vast network of provincial soviets and co-ordinated their activity. Being thus supported by the working class of the whole country, it quickly became powerful. Also it steadily gained more and more influence in the Army. Before long the orders of the soviets often carried far more weight than those of the provisional government. Under such conditions the latter was obliged to deal carefully with the soviets.

It goes without saying that the Government would have preferred to fight them. But to take this action against the organized workers on the morrow of a revolution which had loudly proclaimed absolute freedom of speech, of organization, and of social action, was impossible. For on what real force could it depend to carry out that task? It had none.

Accordingly the Government was compelled to make the most of a bad situation, to tolerate its powerful rival, and even to "flirt" with it. The provisional régime well knew the fragility of the sympathies it had among the workers and in the Army. It was keenly aware that in the first serious social conflict those two decisive forces indubitably would side with the soviets.

As always it "hoped". It sought to gain time. But the presence of this second "directorate", unofficial, but threatening, and with which it had to deal, comprised one of the biggest obstacles that the provisional government—official but powerless—must surmount.

The violent criticism and vigorous propaganda by all the Socialist parties, and especially the extreme leftist elements (left Social Revolutionaries, Bolsheviks, Anarchists) also were not to be disregarded. For, naturally, the Government could not have recourse to repressive measures against freedom of speech. And even if it had dared do this, where were the forces to carry out its orders? It had none at its disposal.

Even a powerful bourgeoisie, organized and strongly entrench-

ed, which already had withstood more than one combat with oppositional forces and possessing powerful material forces (police, Army, money, et cetera) would have been hard put to arrive at a satisfactory solution to so many problems and to impose its will and its programme in the face of the existing situation. And *such a bourgeoisie did not exist in Russia.* As a class conscious of its own interests, the capitalist class in that country was scarcely beginning to exist. Weak, unorganized, and without tradition or historical experience, it could hope for no success. Also it was not active.

So, representing "in principle" a hardly existing and inactive bourgeoisie, the provisional government was condemned to work in a vacuum. This was without doubt the basic cause of its failure.

CHAPTER 4
Toward a Socialist Government; The Poverty of Socialism

THUS THE first provisional Russian government, essentially bourgeois, was rapidly and inevitably reduced to manifest ridiculous and fatal impotence. The poor thing did what it could to maintain itself: it manœuvred, it temporized, it stalled. Meanwhile all the cardinal problems also were bogged down. Criticism of and then general anger against this phantom government increased from day to day. Soon its existence became insupportable. Scarcely sixty days after its solemn inauguration, it was compelled to give way, without a struggle, on May 6, to a so-called "coalition" government (with Socialist participation), whose most influential member was Alexander Kerensky, a very moderate Social Revolutionary, or rather "independent" Socialist.

Could this bourgeois-Socialist régime hope to achieve more satisfactory results than its predecessor? Certainly not. For the conditions of its existence and the impotence of its actions would necessarily be identical with those of the first provisional government. Obliged to rely on a powerless bourgeoisie, forced to continue the war, incapable of finding a real solution of the more and more urgent problems, attacked by the leftists, and surrounded by difficulties of all kinds at all times, this second provisional régime perished ingloriously like the first, and in almost the same length of time, stepping aside on July 2 for a third provisional government, composed primarily of Socialists, with a few bourgeois elements.

It was at this point that Kerensky, supreme leader of the third and subsequently of a fourth government (almost the same as its immediate forerunner) became, for a time, a sort of *Duce* of Russia, and the Social Revolutionary Party, in close collaboration with the Mensheviks, seemed to have emerged definitely as

masters of the Revolution. One step further, and the country would have had a Socialist government which could have relied on very real forces: the peasantry, the mass of industrial workers, a large section of the intellectuals, the soviets, the Army, et cetera.

However, it accomplished nothing.

Upon its attainment of power the last Kerensky government appeared very strong. And, in fact, *it could have become so.*

Kerensky, a lawyer and a Deputy, enjoyed great popularity, both among the masses and in the Army. His speeches in the Duma at the outbreak of the Revolution scored memorable success. And his assumption of power aroused tremendous hopes throughout Russia. He could depend without reservation on the soviets—and therefore on the whole of the nation's working class—for at the moment the overwhelming majority of the delegates [the soviets, factory committees, and the soldiers' committees] were Socialists, and the soviets were entirely in the hands of right Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.

In the early weeks of the Kerensky ministry, it was dangerous to criticize its leader in public, so strong was the country's confidence in him. Several agitators learned this to their cost, while trying to speak against Kerensky in the public squares. There were even cases of lynching.

But to profit from all these remarkable advantages it was necessary that Kerensky fulfil—and fulfil effectively, by deeds—a single condition: the one recommended by Danton in days gone by. He must have *audacity, still more audacity, and audacity all the time.*

Well, this was precisely the quality that Kerensky completely lacked!

In the existing situation *audacity* for him properly meant : 1. Immediate abandonment of the war (the finding of some way to do this); 2. A decisive break with the capitalist bourgeois régime (that is, the formation of a wholly Socialist government); 3. Immediate orientation of the economic and social life of all Russia toward a frankly Socialist system.

All this would have been perfectly logical and "mandatory" for a government of Socialist persuasion, with a Socialist majority, and a Socialist leader. But no! As always, as they did everywhere, the Russian Socialists and Kerensky himself, instead of

understanding the historical necessity and seizing the propitious moment to go forward and finally fulfil their real programme, remained prisoners of their bastard "minimum" programme which categorically required a struggle for a bourgeois democratic republic.

Instead of putting themselves candidly at the service of the working masses and their emancipation, the Socialists and Kerensky, held captive by their own flabby ideology, could find nothing better to do than play the game of Russian and international capitalism.

Kerensky dared not abandon the war nor turn his back on the bourgeoisie, dared not base himself solidly on the working classes, nor even simply to continue the Revolution! And he dared not hasten the calling of the Constituent Assembly.

He wanted to continue the war! And at all costs and by whatever means!

What he did dare to do was, first, to institute a group of reforms in reverse: re-establishment of the death penalty and court-martials at the front, repressive measures in the rear. And finally, there was a long series of visits to the battle-front, and the making of speeches and inflammatory harangues which would, in Kerensky's opinion, revive the war-like enthusiasm of the early days of the conflict among the soldiers. He was aware that the war continued only through inertia. And he wanted to give it a new impetus with words and punishments, not taking any account of the reality.

He orated so much that his title of *Commander-in-Chief* (he also was president of the Council of Ministers) was soon changed by the Russian public to *Orator-in-Chief*.

About two months sufficed to make Kerensky's popularity fall to the bottom, especially among the industrial workers and soldiers, who ended by jeering at his speeches. They wanted deeds, *deeds of peace and social revolution.* They also wanted the speedy calling of the Constituent Assembly. The obstinacy with which all the provisional régimes delayed that convocation was one of the reasons for their unpopularity. The Bolsheviks took advantage of this, promising, among other things, the calling of the Assembly as soon as they would come into power.

In short, the reasons for the failure of the Kerensky govern-

ment were the same as those which brought on the collapse of the preceding régimes: the inability of the moderate Socialists to end the war; the lamentable impotence of this fourth government to solve the basic national problems; and its intention of imprisoning the Revolution within the limits of a bourgeois regimen.

Several circumstances and events—the logical outcome of these fatal inadequacies—aggravated the situation and precipitated Kerensky's downfall.

In the first place, the Bolshevik Party, having by this time assembled its best forces and thus possessing a powerful organization for propaganda and action, daily spread throughout the country, by means of thousands of orators and published articles, skilful, accurate, and vigorous criticisms of the policy, attitude, and activities of the Government (and also of all the moderate Socialists). It advocated immediately cessation of the war, demobilization, continuation of the Revolution.

It diffused with all its energy its social and revolutionary ideas. It repeated every day its promise to convoke the Constituent Assembly at once, and finally to resolve—quickly and successfully —all the problems of the hour *if it was given power.* Constantly it hammered, without let-up and without allowing itself to be intimidated, on the same nail: *Power!* "All power to the Soviets!" it shouted from morning to evening, and from evening to morning. Give political power to the Bolsheviki and everything would be fixed, resolved, realized.

Increasingly listened to and followed by the intellectual workers, the working masses in industry, and the Army, multiplying, with precipitous rapidity, the number of its adherents, and thus penetrating into all the factories and enterprises, the Bolshevik Party already had recruited by June, 1917, an imposing force of militants, agitators, propagandists, writers, organizers, and men of action. It also possessed considerable funds. And it had at its head a courageous central committee directed by Lenin. It carried on activity that was fierce, feverish, and fulminating, and it felt itself, at least morally, the master of the situation. Especially was this true because it had no rivals on the extreme left. The left Social Revolutionary Party, much weaker, could only figure as a satellite, the Anarchist movement was scarcely beginning; and

as for the revolutionary Syndicalist movement, it was, as we know, non-existent.

Kerensky, feeling himself less and less secure, *dared not attack the Bolsheviks resolutely, straightforwardly.* He had recourse, in a desultory manner, to half-measures, which, while sufficient to defeat his opponent, gave it publicity, so that it won the attention, esteem, and finally the confidence of the masses. In the last analysis, these timid reactions strengthened the enemy instead of weakening it. And then, like many others, Kerensky did not see the danger. At that moment hardly anyone anticipated a Bolshevik victory. It is notable that even in that party itself, Lenin was almost alone in his certainty of winning and almost alone insisted that opportunity for preparing for an insurrection was at hand.

Finally Kerensky, pressed by the Allies, and hypnotized by his own dreams and probably by his own speeches, had the misfortune of launching, on June 18, his now famous offensive on the German front—an offensive which failed miserably and struck a terrible blow to his popularity. And on July 3 an armed uprising against the Government, participated in by troops (and by sailors from the Kronstadt fortress) broke out in Petrograd, with cries of "Down with Kerensky! Long live the Social Revolution! All power to the Soviets!" This time Kerensky still could master the situation, though with difficulty. Nevertheless he lost the very shadow of his former influence.

Then an event occurred which gave him the *coup de grace.* Made desperate by the rising tide of the Revolution and by Kerensky's indecision, a "White" general, Kornilov, brought from the front several thousand soldiers (mostly from Caucasian regiments—in effect colonial troops—more easily duped and manipulated than others), deceived them about what was happening in the capital, and sent them to Petrograd under the command of another general who swore that he would "put an end to *the bands of armed criminals* and defend the Government, which is powerless to exterminate them."

For reasons which perhaps will someday be known specifically, Kerensky gave only feeble resistance to Kornilov—a token resistance. The capital was saved only by the furious determination, the prodigious effort, and sublime spirit of sacrifice of the city's

Cossacks in the Nevski Prospeckt guardedly watch a demonstration of soldiers and Kronstadt sailors in July, 1917.

workers. With the aid of the Petrograd Soviet's left wing, several thousand of the workers armed themselves hastily and departed on their own initiative for "the front" against Kornilov. A battle, on the outskirts of the capital, remained indecisive.

The workers did not yield an inch of territory. But they left many dead on the field, and were not sure of having enough men and munitions for the next day. However, thanks to the quick and energetic action of the railroad and telegraph workers, assisted by soldiers' committees on the battle-line, Kornilov's headquarters were isolated from the front and from the whole country.

In the night, that commander's soldiers, surprised by the heroic resistance of [men who had been described to them as] "bandits, criminals, and idlers", and suspecting trickery, decided to examine the dead. They discovered that the bodies all had the calloused hands of *bona fide* industrial workers. Presently, too, a few groups of Socialists from the Caucasus who were then in Petrograd managed to get a delegation into Kornilov's camp. The delegates conferred with the soldiers there, told them the real situation, dispelled the myth of the "bandits", and persuaded them to abandon the fratricidal fight. Next morning, Kornilov's men, declaring that they had been deceived, refused to continue fighting against their brother workers and returned to the main front. The Kornilov adventure ended.

Immediately after this, public opinion accused Kerensky of secretly conniving with Kornilov. Whether true or not, this story was widely believed. Morally the situation spelled the finish of the Kerensky government and, in general, of the moderate Socialists. The way was open for a resolute offensive by the Bolshevik Party.

Then another event of major importance occurred. In new elections of delegates (to the Soviets, factory committees, and soldiers' committees) *the Bolsheviks scored a crushing victory over the moderate Socialists.* Thus that party attained full control of all working class and revolutionary activity. With the collaboration of the left Social Revolutionaries the Bolsheviks likewise gained wide sympathy among the peasants. They were now in an excellent strategic position for a decisive attack.

At this juncture Lenin conceived the idea of calling a Pan-Russian congress of Soviets, which would rise against Kerensky, overthrow him with the help of the Army, and inaugurate Bolshe-

vik power. And preparations to carry out that plan began at once, partly in the open, partly in secret. Compelled to hide, Lenin directed the necessary operations by remote control. Kerensky, while suspecting the danger, was powerless to avert it. Events moved swiftly. The last act of the drama was about to start.

It is fitting at this point to sum up certain outstanding elements in the Russian situation in that period.

All the conservative or moderate governments which officiated from February to October, 1917, proved their impotence to solve, under the existing conditions, the exceptionally acute problems with which the Revolution had confronted the people of Russia. This was the principal reason why the nation threw out, one after the other in the short space of eight months, the bourgeois constitutional government, the democratic bourgeois government, and the two moderate Socialist governments.

Two facts especially marked this impotence:

1. The impossibility of the country continuing the war, and of any of the four governments cited ending it.
2. The urgency with which the people awaited the calling of the Constituent Assembly, and the inability of those governments to call it.

The insistent propaganda of the extreme left for immediate cessation of the war, for immediate summoning of the Assembly, and for the integral Social Revolution as the only way to safety, with other factors of less importance, animated the thunderous march of the Revolution.

Thus the Russian Revolution, which had broken out in February, as an uprising against Tsarism, rapidly outgrew the stages of a bourgeois political revolution, and of democratic and moderate Socialism.

In October, the road being cleared of all obstacles, the Revolution was set, effectively and completely, on a social revolutionary basis. And therefore it was logical and natural that, after the failure of all the moderate governments and political parties, the working masses should turn to the last party remaining, the only one which looked toward the Social Revolution without fear,

the only one which promised, if it were given power, a speedy and happy solution for all the existing problems—the Bolshevik Party.

The Anarchist movement, we must repeat, was still much too weak to have tangible influence on events. And there was no Syndicalist movement.

From a social point of view, the situation was as follows:

Three fundamental elements existed: 1. the bourgeoisie; 2. the working class; 3. the Bolshevik Party, acting as ideologue and "advance guard".

The bourgeoisie, as the reader knows, was weak. The Bolsheviki would not have too much trouble in eliminating it.

The working class also was weak. Unorganized (in the true sense of the word), inexperienced, and basically unaware of its true task, *it could do nothing by itself* in its own interests. *It left everything to the Bolsheviks, who seized control of the action.*

We will add a note here which anticipates developments somewhat, but which will enable the reader to follow and understand them better.

This inadequacy of the Russian working class at the beginning of the Revolution subsequently proved fatal to the whole Revolution. [Apropos of this] there was an evil debit left over from the abortive revolution of 1905-06; at that time *the workers did not win the right to organize;* they remained scattered. In 1917 they felt the effects of that fact.

[Consider the early course of the Bolshevik Party after it took control]. Instead of simply helping the workers to achieve the Revolution and emancipate themselves, instead of aiding them in their struggle, the rôle to which the workers assigned it in their thoughts, the rôle which, normally, would be that of all revolutionary ideologists, and which never [properly] includes taking and exercising "political power"—instead of performing this rôle, *the Bolshevik party, once in control, installed itself as absolute master.* It was quickly corrupted. It organized itself as a privileged caste. And later *it flattened and subjected the working class in order to exploit it, under new forms, in its own interest.*

Because of this the whole Revolution was falsified, misled. For, when the masses of the people became cognizant of their danger, it was too late. After a struggle between them and the new masters, solidly organized and in possession of ample material,

administrative, military, and police strength, the people succumbed. That bitter and unequal conflict went on for some three years, and for a long time remained practically unknown outside of Russia. The real emancipating revolution again was stifled, and by the "revolutionaries" themselves.

Let it be explained here that "political power" is not a force in itself. It is strong when it can base itself on capital, the arms of the State, the Army, the police. Lacking those supports, it remains "suspended in the void", powerless, and unable to operate. The Russian Revolution has given formal proof of this. After February, 1917, the Russian bourgeoisie had "political power" in its hands, yet it was actually powerless, and its "power" fell by itself two months later. Following its bankruptcy it no longer possessed any real force—neither productive capital, nor mass confidence, nor a solid State apparatus, nor an Army of its own. The second and third provisional governments fell in the same manner and for the same reason. And it is highly probable that if the Bolsheviki had not precipitated events, the Kerensky régime would have met precisely the same fate a little later.

Manifestly it follows that if the Social Revolution is in the process of taking over [a nation] (so that capital, land, mines, factories, means of communication, and money begin to pass into the hands of the people, and the Army makes common cause with the latter) there is no reason to be concerned about "political power". If the defeated classes attempt, in line with tradition, to form a government, what importance could it have? Even if they should succeed in that, it would be a phantom government, ineffectual and easily suppressed by the slightest effort of the armed people.

And as for the Revolution, what need has it of a "government" of "political power"? It has only one task to perform, that of advancing by the same course as the people, to organize itself, to consolidate itself, to perfect itself economically, to defend itself if need be, to extend itself, to build a new social life for the masses. Which has nothing to do with "political power". For *all this is a normal function of the revolutionary people themselves,* of their various economic and social organizations, their coordinating federations, their defence formations.

What is "political power" fundamentally? What is "political"

activity? How many times have I posed these questions to members of left political parties without ever being able to obtain an intelligible definition or answer! How can one define "political" activity, as an activity in itself, specifically useful for the community, having a definite reason for existing? One can describe and define, more or less precisely other activity—social, economic, administrative, juridical, diplomatic, cultural. But "political" activity—what is it? It is maintained that this term denotes exactly a central administrative activity, indispensable for a widely extended group: for a nation. But then *does* "political power" mean "administrative power"?

It is easy to see that these two ideas are not at all identical. Consciously or unconsciously, *power* and *administration* are thus confused (just as *State* and *society* are confused). The fact is that administrative activity is not separate—cannot be separated—from any branch of human activity; it is an integral part of it. It functions in all activity in so far as it is a principle of organization, of co-ordination, or normal centralization (to the degree that it is needed) federatively—and from the periphery toward the centre.

For certain kinds of human activity, one can conceive of a general administration. In each field, or in a group of fields, the men possessing the ability to organize should normally exercise the function of organizers, or "administrators"—a function which is simply a part of the whole activity of the field in question. These men, workers like the others, could thus insure the "administration of things" (contact, cohesion, equilibrium, et cetera) without having to establish a rigid political power as such. And "political power", like every other "thing apart", remains undefinable, because it does not correspond to any normal, real, concrete human activity. That is why "political power" becomes empty and falls of its own weight when the real functions are carried out normally, by their corresponding services. "As such", it cannot exist, for there is no specific "political" function in a human community.

A. A. Goldenweiser, a Russian jurist, recounts in his memoirs [1] that he lived during the Revolution in a city in the Ukraine which was in a notably unstable zone. In the course of events that city

[1] *Kievan Reminiscences,* in Archives of the Russian Revolution, Vol. VI, pp. 161-303, [Moscow?] 1922.

was left several times without "power", either White or Red. And with astonishment, M. Goldenweiser reports that during the whole period the people there lived, worked, and took care of their own needs as well as, or even better than, when there was "power". M. Goldenweiser was not the only one to mention that fact. What *is* surprising is that he was astonished at it.

Is it "power" that makes men live, act, and organize to satisfy their needs? In all human history, has there ever been a "power" which rendered society well organized, harmonious, and happy? History teaches us the opposite: human societies are—to a degree that it is historically possible—happy, harmonious, and progressive in periods when political power is weak (*vide* ancient Greece or certain periods in the Middle Ages) and where the people have been more or less let alone by it. And *vice versa*: a strong "political power" never gives the people anything but misfortunes, wars, poverty, stagnation.

"Political" power took form in the evolution of human society for special historical reasons, which in our time no longer exist. We cannot concern ourselves here with this matter; it would take us too far from our subject. We shall confine ourselves to stating that fundamentally, for thousands of years, "power" has never produced anything but wars. All scholarly writings [on that theme] testify to this. And [recent decades in Russia have demonstrated] it in a striking manner.

It is contended that in order to "administrate" it is necessary to be able to *impose, command, coerce*. Thus a "political power" is a central administration of a large group (of a country) which possesses the means of coercion. But, in case of need, a popular administrative service, as such, can have recourse to measures of this sort, without having to set up a specific, permanent "political power", and even more efficiently than the latter.

Also it is argued that the masses are incapable of organizing themselves and of creating by themselves an effective administration. Farther on in this work the reader will find, I hope, ample proof to the contrary.

If, in the midst of a social revolution, the political parties want to amuse themselves by "organizing power" the people have only to pursue their revolutionary tasks, leaving the parties isolated; they will soon abandon this useless game. If after February, 1917,

and especially after October, the Russian workers, instead of creating new masters, had simply continued their tasks, helped by all the revolutionists, defended by their own Army, and supported by the country at large, the very idea of "political power" soon would have disappeared.

In the pages which follow the reader will come upon various facts, publicly unknown until now, which will confirm this thesis.

We hope that the next revolution will travel the right road, and not let itself be misled by the political "palace revolutionists".

CHAPTER 5
The Bolshevik Revolution

AT THE end of October, 1917, the climax drew near in Russia. The masses were ready for a new revolution. Several spontaneous uprisings since July (the one already mentioned in Petrograd, one in Kaluga, another in Kazan) and disturbances among both troops and civilians, were adequate evidence of this. From that time onward the Bolshevik Party saw itself in a position to avail itself of two real forces—the confidence of the great masses and a large majority in the Army. It went into action and feverishly prepared for a decisive battle which it was determined to win. Its agitation was furious. It put the finishing touches on the formation of workers' and soldiers' units for the crucial combat. Also it organized, completely, its own units and drew up, for use in the event of success, the composition of the projected Bolshevik government, with Lenin at its head. He watched developments closely and issued his final instructions. Trotsky, Lenin's right-hand man, who had returned several months earlier from the United States, where he had lived after his escape from Siberia, was to share a considerable portion of the power.

The left Social Revolutionists were collaborating with the Bolsheviki. The Anarcho-Syndicalists and the Anarchists, few in numbers and badly organized, yet very active, did everything they could to support and encourage the action of the masses against Kerensky. However, they tried to orient the new revolution away from the political course of the conquest of power by a new party, and to put it on the true social road, toward free organization and collaboration, in a spirit of liberty.

The ensuing course of events is fairly well known. We shall recount the facts briefly.

Having recognized the extreme weakness of the Kerensky government, won the sympathy of an overwhelming majority of

the working masses, and having been assured of the active support of the Kronstadt fleet—always the vanguard of the Revolution—and of the majority of the Petrograd troops, the Bolshevik Party's central committee set the insurrection for October 25. The Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets was called for the same day.

In the minds of the central committee, this congress—the great majority of its delegates being Bolsheviks who supported their party's directives blindly—would, if need be, proclaim and uphold the Revolution, rally all of the country's revolutionary forces, and stand up to the eventual resistance of Kerensky.

On the evening of October 25 the insurrection came off, effectively. The congress met in Petrograd as scheduled. But it did not have to intervene.

There was no street fighting, no barricades, no widespread combat. Everything happened simply and quickly.

Abandoned by everyone, but holding fast to its illusions, the Kerensky government was sitting in the Winter Palace in the capital. It was defended by a battalion of the "elite" guards, a battalion of women, and a handful of young cadets.

Some detachments of troops won over by the Bolsheviki, acting according to a plan worked out jointly by the Congress of Soviets and the party's central committee, surrounded the palace and attacked its guards. This action of the troops was supported by some of the battleships of the Baltic fleet, brought from Kronstadt and drawn up in the Neva opposite the palace. Most notable was the cruiser *Aurora.*

After a short skirmish and a few cannon-shot from the cruiser, the Bolshevik troops took the palace.

Meanwhile, however, Kerensky had managed to flee. The other members of the Government were arrested.

Thus, in Petrograd, the "insurrection" was limited to a minor military operation, led by the Bolsheviks. Once the seat of government was emptied, the party's central committee installed itself there as conqueror. The overturn was virtually a palace revolution.

An attempt by Kerensky to march on Petrograd with some troops summoned from the front (Cossacks, and again the Caucasian division) failed—thanks to the vigorous armed intervention of

the capital's working masses, and especially of the Kronstadt sailors, who quickly came to the rescue. In a battle near Gatchina, on the outskirts of Petrograd, a part of Kerensky's troops were beaten, and another part went over to the revolutionary camp. Kerensky fled and escaped abroad.

In Moscow and elsewhere, the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks was attended with greater difficulty.

Moscow saw ten days of furious fighting between the revolutionary forces and those of reaction. There were many victims. Several sections of the city were heavily damaged by artillery fire. Finally the Revolution won.

In certain other cities also, the victory was gained only after intense struggle.

But the countryside, for the most part, remained calm, or rather, indifferent. The peasants were too much absorbed in their own local preoccupations. For some time they had been in the process of solving the "agrarian problem" for themselves. In any case, they could see nothing wrong in the Bolsheviks taking power. Once they had the land, and didn't have to fear the return of the *pomestchiki,* the big land-owners, they were nearly satisfied, and gave little thought to the occupants of the throne. They didn't expect any harm from the Bolsheviki. And they had heard it said that the latter wanted to end the war, which seemed perfectly just and reasonable to them. Thus they had no reason to oppose the new revolution.

The way in which that revolution was accomplished illustrates very well the uselessness of a struggle for "political power". If, for one reason or another, such power is supported by a strong section of the populace and especially by the Army, it would be impossible to win against it, and therefore futile to attack it. But if, on the contrary, it is abandoned by the majority of the people and by the Army—which occurs in every genuine revolution—then it is not worth bothering with. At the slightest gesture of the armed people, it will fall like a house of cards. It is necessary to be concerned, not with "political" power, but with the real power of the Revolution, with its inexhaustible, spontaneous, potential forces, its irresistible spirit, the far-flung horizons it opens—in short, with the enormous possibilities it brings in its train.

However, in several regions, notably in the East and in Central Russia, the victory of the Bolsheviks was not complete. Counter-revolutionary movements soon appeared. They consolidated themselves, gained in importance, and led to a civil war which lasted until the end of 1921.

One of those movements, headed by General Anton Ivanovitch Denikin, took on the proportions of an uprising which seriously threatened the power of the Bolsheviks. Starting from the depths of Southern Russia, Denikin's army almost reached the gates of Moscow in the summer of 1919.

Also very dangerous was another uprising launched by General Baron Peter Wrangel in the same region. And a third movement of White Russians organized by Admiral Alexander Vassilievitch Kolchak in Siberia was for a time conspicuously menacing. Marching with his army from his headquarters in Omsk westward to the Ural mountains, he vanquished the Bolsheviki in several battles.

Other counter-revolutionary rebellions were of less importance.

The greater part of these movements was partly supported and given supplies through foreign intervention. Some were backed and even politically directed by the moderate Socialists, the right Social Revolutionaries, and the Mensheviks.

On the other hand, the Bolshevik power had to carry on a long and difficult struggle in two directions—against its ex-partners, the left Social Revolutionaries, and against the Anarchist movement and ideology. Naturally, these leftist movements did not fight the Bolsheviks on the counter-revolutionary side, but, on the contrary, in the name of "the true Social Revolution", betrayed, in their opinion, by the Bolshevik Party in power.

Beyond question, the birth, and especially the extent and strength of the counter-revolutionary forces, were the inevitable result of the bankruptcy of the Bolshevik power, and of its inability to organize a new economic and social life for the Russian people. Farther on the reader will see what the real development of the October Revolution was, and also what were the means by which the new power had to impose itself, maintain itself, master the storm, and "solve" after its own fashion the problems of the Revolution.

Not until the end of 1922 could the Bolshevik Party feel itself completely—at least for a moment in history—master of the situation.

On the ruins of Tsarism and of the bourgeois-feudal system, it was now necessary to begin to build a new society.

BOOK TWO

BOLSHEVISM AND ANARCHISM

PART I

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF THE REVOLUTION

CHAPTER 1
Two Opposing Conceptions of Social Revolution

OUR PRINCIPAL task herein is to examine and establish, to the extent of our ability, what is unknown or little known about the Russian Revolution.

We begin by emphasizing a fact which, without being ignored, is considered only superficially in the western world. This: *In October,* 1917, *this revolution entered upon wholly new terrain—that of the great Social Revolution.* Thus it advanced on a very special route which was totally unexplored.

It follows that the subsequent development of the Revolution assumed an equally new and original character. Therefore, our account will not resemble any of the existing histories of that revolt. Its general appearance, the factors it comprised, its very language, will change, taking on an unaccustomed and singular aspect.

We go on to another fact which is less well known, and which for many readers will be unexpected. In the course of the crises and failures which followed one another up to the revolution of 1917, *Bolshevism was not the only conception of how the Social Revolution should be accomplished.* Without speaking of the left Social Revolutionary doctrine, resembling Bolshevism in its political, authoritarian, statist, and centralist character, nor of several other small similar currents, *a second fundamental idea, likewise envisaging a full and integral social revolution, took shape and spread among the revolutionary circles and also among the working masses; this was the Anarchist idea.*

Its influence, very weak at first, increased as events widened in scope. By the end of 1918 this influence had become such that the Bolsheviks, who did not allow any criticism, nor any contradiction nor opposition—were seriously disturbed. *From* 1919 *until the end of* 1921, *they had to engage in a severe struggle*

with the progress of this idea: a struggle at least as long and as bitter as that against reaction.

We underline at this point a third fact which also is not sufficiently known: *Bolshevism in power combated the Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas and movements not on the grounds of ideological or concrete experience, not by means of an open and honest struggle, but with the same methods of repression that it had employed against reaction:* methods of pure violence. It began by brutally closing the centres of the libertarian organizations, by prohibiting all Anarchist activity or propaganda. It condemned the masses to not hearing the voices of the Anarchists, and to misunderstanding their programme. And when, despite this constraint, the Anarchist idea gained ground, *the Bolsheviks passed rapidly to more violent methods, imprisonment, outlawing, killing. Then the unequal struggle between these two tendencies —one in power, the other confronted by power—increased, and became, in certain regions, an actual civil war.* In the Ukraine, notably, this state of war lasted more than two years, compelling the Bolsheviki to mobilize all their forces to stifle the Anarchist idea and to wipe out the popular movements inspired by it.

Thus the conflict between the two conceptions of the Social Revolution and, at the same time, between the Bolshevik power and certain movements of the labouring masses, held a highly important place in the events of the period embracing 1919-1921. However, all authors without exception, from the extreme right to the extreme left—we are not speaking of libertarian literature—have passed over this fact in silence. Therefore we are obliged to establish it, to supply all the details, and to draw the reader's attention to it.

Here two pertinent questions arise:

1. When, on the eve of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviki rallied an overwhelming majority of popular votes, what was the cause of the important and rapid rise of the Anarchist idea?

2. What, exactly, was the position of the Anarchists in relation to the Bolsheviks, and why were the latter impelled to fight—and fight violently—this libertarian idea and movement?

In replying to these questions it will be found easy to reveal to the reader the true visage of Bolshevism.

And by comparing the two opposing ideas in action one can

understand them better, evaluate their respective worth, discover the reasons for this state of war between the two camps, and, finally, "feel the pulse" of the Revolution after the Bolshevik seizure of power in October, 1917.

Accordingly we will compare, in a rough manner, the two concepts:

The Bolshevik idea was to build, on the ruins of the bourgeois state, *a new "Workers' State" to constitute a "workers' and peasants' government," and to establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat."*

The Anarchist idea [was and] is to transform the economic and social bases of society *without having recourse to a political state,* to a government, or to a dictatorship of any sort. That is, to achieve the Revolution and resolve its problems not by *political or statist* means, but by means of natural and free activity, *economic and social, of the associations of the workers themselves,* after having overtnrown the last capitalist government.

To co-ordinate action, the first conception envisaged a certain political power, organizing the life of the State with the help of the government and its agents and according to formal directives from the "centre".

The other conception conjectured the complete abandonment of political and statist organization; and the utilization of a *direct and federative* alliance and collaboration of the economic, social, technical, or other agencies (unions, co-operatives, various associations, et cetera) locally, regionally, nationally, internationally; therefore a centralization, *not political nor statist,* going from the central government to the periphery *commanded* by it, but *economic and technical,* following needs and real interests, going from the periphery to the centres, and established in a logical and natural way, according to concrete necessity, without domination or command.

It should be noted how absurd—or biased—is the reproach aimed at the Anarchists that they know only how "to destroy", and that they have no "positive" constructive ideas, especially when this charge is hurled by those of the "left". Discussions between the political parties of the extreme left and the Anarchists have always been about the positive and constructive tasks which are to be accomplished after the destruction of the bourgeois State

(on which subject everybody is in agreement). What would be the way of building the new society then: statist, centralist, and political, or federalist, a-political, and simply social? Such was always the theme of the controversies between them; an irrefutable proof that the essential preoccupation of the Anarchists was always future construction.

To the thesis of the parties, a political and centralized "transitional" State, the Anarchists opposed theirs: progressive but *immediate* passage to the economic and federative community. The political parties based their arguments on the social structure left by the centuries and past régimes, and they pretended that this model was compatible with constructive ideas. The Anarchists believed that new construction required, *from the beginning,* new methods, *and they recommended those methods.* Whether their thesis was true or false, it proved in any case that they knew clearly what they wanted, and that they had strictly constructive ideas.

As a general rule, an erroneous interpretation—or, more often, one that was deliberately inaccurate—pretended that the libertarian conception implied the absence of all organization. Nothing is farther from the truth. It is a question, not of "organization or non-organization", but of *two different principles of organization.*

All revolutions necessarily begin in a more or less spontaneous manner, therefore in a confused, chaotic way. It goes without saying—and the libertarians understood this as well as the others—that if a revolution remains in that primitive stage, it will fail. Immediately after the spontaneous impetus, the principle of organization has to intervene in a revolution as in all other human activity. And it is then that the grave question arises: What should be the manner and basis of this organization?

One school maintains that a central directing group—an "elite" group—ought to be formed to take in hand the whole work, lead it according to its conception, impose the latter on the whole collectivity, establish a government and organize a State, dictate its will to the populace, impose its "laws" by force and violence, combat, suppress, and even eliminate, those who are not in agreement with it.

Their opponents [the Anarchists] consider that such a conception is absurd, contrary to the fundamental principles of human

evolution, and, in the last analysis, more than sterile—and harmful to the work undertaken. Naturally, the Anarchists say, it is necessary that society be organized. But this new organization should be done freely, socially, and, certainly, from the bottom. The principle of organization should arise, not from a centre created in advance to monopolize the whole and impose itself on it, but—what is exactly the opposite—from all quarters, to lead to points of co-ordination, natural centers designed to serve all these quarters.

Of course it is necessary that the organizing spirit, that men capable of carrying on organization—the "elite"—should intervene. But, in every place and under all circumstances, all those valuable humans should freely participate in the common work, *as true collaborators, and not as dictators.* It is necessary that they especially create an example, and employ themselves in grouping, co-ordinating, organizing, using good will, initiative, and knowledge, and all capacities and aptitudes without dominating, subjugating, or oppressing any one. Such individuals would be *true organizers* and theirs would constitute *a true organization,* fertile and solid, because it would be natural, human and effectively progressive. Whereas the other "organization", *imitating that of the old society of oppression and exploitation, and therefore adapted to those two goals*—would be sterile and unstable, because it would not conform to the new purposes, and therefore would not be at all progressive.

In fact, it would not contain any element of a new society, inasmuch as *it would only alter the appearance of the old.* Belonging to an outdated society, obsolete in all respects, and thus impossible as a naturally free and truly human institution, it could only maintain itself by means of new artifices, new deceptions, new violence, new oppression and exploitation. Which inevitably would lead astray, falsify, and endanger the whole revolution. So it is obvious that such an organization will remain unproductive *as a motor for the Social Revolution.* It can no more serve as a "transitional society" (as the "Communists" pretend), for such a society must necessarily possess at least some of the seeds of that toward which it purports to evolve. And all authoritarian and statist societies possess only residues of the fallen social order.

According to the libertarian thesis, it is the labouring masses

themselves who, by means of the various class organizations, factory committees, industrial and agricultural unions, co-operatives, et cetera, federated and centralized *on a basis of real needs*, should apply themselves everywhere, to solving the problems of waging the Revolution. By their powerful and fertile action, because they are free and conscious, they should co-ordinate their efforts throughout the whole country. As for the "elite", their rôle, according to the libertarians, is to *help* the masses, enlighten them, teach them, give them necessary advice, impel them to take the initiative, provide them with an example, and support them in their action—*but not direct them governmentally*.

The libertarians hold that a favourable solution of the problems of the Revolution can result only from the freely and consciously collective and united work of millions of men and women who bring to it and harmonize in it all the variety of their needs and interests, their strength and capacities, their gifts, aptitudes, inclinations, professional knowledge, and understanding. By the natural interplay of their economic, technical, and social organizations, with the help of the "elite" and, in case of need, under the protection of their freely organized armed forces, the labouring masses should, in view of the libertarians, be able to carry the Revolution effectively forward and progressively arrive at the practical achievement of all of its tasks.

The Bolshevik thesis was diametrically opposed to this. In the contention of the Bolsheviki it was the elite—their elite—which, forming a "workers' government" and establishing a so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat", should carry out the social transformation and solve its prodigious problems. The masses should aid this elite (the opposite of the libertarian belief that the elite should aid the masses) by faithfully, blindly, mechanically carrying out its plans, decisions, orders, and "laws". And the armed forces, also in imitation of those of the capitalist countries, likewise should blindly obey the "elite".

Such is, and remains, the essential difference between the two ideas. Such also were the two opposed conceptions of the Social Revolution at the moment of the Russian upheaval in 1917.

The Bolsheviks, as we have said, didn't want even to listen to the Anarchists, still less to let them expound their thesis to the masses. Believing themselves in possession of an absolute, indis-

putable, "scientific" truth, and pretending to have to impose it immediately, they fought and eliminated the libertarian movement *by violence* from the time the Anarchist idea began to interest the masses—the usual procedure of all dominators, exploiters, and inquisitors.

In October, 1917, the two conceptions entered into conflict, which became increasingly acute, with no compromise possible. Then, for four years, this conflict kept the Bolshevik power on the alert, and played a more and more significant part in the vicissitudes of the Revolution, until the libertarian movement in Russia was completely destroyed by military force at the end of 1921.

Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, and the lessons that it teaches, it has been carefully killed by the whole political press.

CHAPTER 2
Causes and Consequences of the Bolshevik Conception

IT WAS, as is well known, the political, governmental, statist, centralist conception which won in Russia in 1917.

And at this point two preliminary questions arise which need to be clarified before we deal with the events there in that year.

What were the fundamental reasons that permitted Bolshevism to triumph over Anarchism in the Russian Revolution? How is that triumph to be evaluated?

The numerical difference between the two groups and the poor organization of the Anarchists is not enough to explain their lack of success. In the course of developments their numbers could have been increased and their organization improved. Violence alone also is not a sufficient reason. If the masses could have been won over to Anarchist ideas in time, violence could not have been used against that movement.

Moreover, as will be seen, the defeat could be imputed neither to the Anarchist idea as such nor to the attitude of the libertarians. It was the almost unavoidable consequence of a complexity of factors beyond their control.

Therefore let us seek to discover the essential causes of the repulse of the Anarchist concept. They are multiple. We will enumerate them, in the order of their importance, and try to judge their exact worth:

1. *The general state of mind of the masses,* and also of the cultivated strata of the population.

In Russia, as everywhere else, the State and the government seemed to the masses to be elements that were indispensable, natural, and historically established for all time. The people did not even ask if the State and the government represented healthy

institutions.[1] Such a question did not occur to them. Or if some one formulated it they began—and often also ended—by not understanding him.

[1] To avoid confusion, I will give some definitions here:

I use the term *State* in its *current* and *concrete* meaning a meaning that it has acquired at the end of a long historical evolution, a meaning which is perfectly and uniformly accepted by everyone, a meaning finally, *which precisely constitutes the object of the whole controversy.*

Herein *the State* signifies a congealed political organism, "mechanically" centralized or directed by a political government supported by a complexity of laws and coercive institutions.

Certain bourgeois, Socialist, and Communist authors and critics use the term *State* in another sense, vast and general, declaring that all organized society on a large scale represents a State. And they deduce from this that any new society, whatever it is, will "necessarily" be a State. According to them, we are fruitlessly discussing a *word.*

According to us, *they* are playing with words. For a concrete concept, generally accepted and historically given, they substitute another, and they combat, in the name of the latter, anti-statist, libertarian, Anarchist ideas. Moreover, they thus confuse, unconsciously or deliberately, two essentially different concepts *State* and *Society.*

It goes without saying that the future society—the real one—will be a *society.* It is not a question of the word, but of the *essence.* (It is probable that they [those authors and critics] will abandon a term which designates a determined and limited form of society. In any case, if the future good society is called a "State" it will thus give that term an entirely different meaning from that which is the subject of the controversy.) What is important—and what the Anarchists maintain—is that this future society will be incompatible with what is called a State at present.

I take advantage of this occasion to remark that many authors are wrong in admitting only two definitions of the term accepted up to now: Either the State (which they confuse with Society) or a free disorganized assembly and a chaotic struggle between individuals and groups of individuals. Consciously or unconsciously, they omit a third possibility which is neither a State (in the concrete meaning indicated) nor a random gathering of individuals, *but a society based on the free and natural union of all sorts of associations and federations: consumers and producers.*

There exists, therefore, not one but two essentially different anti-statisms. One, unreasonable, and consequently easily attacked, is allegedly based on the *"free caprice of individuals."* (Who has advocated such an absurdity? Is it not a pure invention, created for the sake of argument?) The other is a-political, but is reasonably based on something perfectly organized, on the co-operative union of various associations. It is in the name of the latter form of *anti-statism* that Anarchism combats the State.

An analogous observation also should be made about the term *government.* There are many who declare: "It will never be possible to dispense with men who organize, administer, direct, et cetera." Those who do these things for a vast social complex—for a "State"—form a "government" whether you like it or not. And they still pretend that it is only a discussion of words! They fall here into the same error. The political and coercive government of *a political State* is one thing; a body of administrators, organizers and, animators, or of technical, professional, or other directors, indispensable for the co-ordinated functioning of the associations, federations, et cetera, is another.

So let us not play with words. Let us be precise and clear. Does one accept, yes or no, that a political State, directed by a representative, political, or other government, can serve a function in a true future society? If yes, one is not an Anarchist. If no, one is already one, for the most part. Does one agree, yes or no, that a political State, et cetera, can serve a transitional society on the way to true Socialism? If yes, one is not an Anarchist. If no, one is.

2. This statist prejudice, almost innate, resulting from evolution and environment through thousands of years, thus becoming "second nature", was further reinforced—especially in Russia, where Anarchist literature hardly existed except for a few clandestine pamphlets and leaflets—by the press generally, including that of the Socialist parties.

We must not forget that the advanced youth in Russia read a literature which invariably presented Socialism in a *statist* form. The Marxists and the anti-Marxists disputed among themselves, but for both *the State remained the indisputable basis of all modern society.*

So Russia's younger generation never thought of Socialism except in a statist form. Except for a rare few individual exceptions, the Anarchist conceptions remained unknown to them until the events of 1917. Not only the Russian press, but all education in that country—all the time—had had a statist character.

3. It was for the reasons set forth above that the Socialist parties, including the Bolsheviks, had at their disposal, at the beginning of the Revolution, sizeable *cadres* of militants ready for action.

The members of the moderate Socialist parties already were relatively numerous at that time, which was one of the causes of the success of the Mensheviks and the right Social Revolutionaries. As for the Bolshevik *cadres,* they were then mainly abroad. But all these men [and women] quickly returned home and immediately set to work.

Compared with the Socialist and Bolshevik forces which were acting in Russia from the beginning of the Revolution on a wide scale and in an organized, disciplined manner, the Anarchists were only a handful of individuals without influence.

But it was not only a question of numbers. Renouncing political methods and goals, the Anarchists logically did not form an artificially disciplined political party for the purpose of con-

CIVILIZATION from *Golos Truda.*

quering power. They organized themselves into groups for propaganda and social action, and later into associations and federations practicing free discipline. This mode of organization and action contributed to putting them, provisionally, in an inferior position in relation to the political parties. That, however, did not discourage them, for they were working for the day when the masses, having been made to understand—by the force of events, reinforced by explanatory and educational propaganda—the vital truth of their conception, it would be achieved.

I recall that, when I returned to Russia from abroad and arrived in Petrograd in the early part of July, 1917, I was struck by the impressive number of Bolshevik notices announcing meetings and lectures in all parts of the capital and suburbs, in public halls, in factories, and in other gathering places. I didn't see a single Anarchist notice. Also I learned that the Bolshevik Party was publishing, in Petrograd and elsewhere, a daily paper of wide circulation, and that it had important and influential nuclei nearly everywhere—notably in the factories, in the administrations, and in the Army.

And I observed at the same time, with bitter disappointment, that there was not in the capital a single Anarchist newspaper nor any oral Anarchist propaganda. There were, it is true, a few very primitive libertarian groups there. And in Kronstadt there were a small number of Anarchists whose influence made itself felt. But these *"cadres"* were insufficient to carry on effective propaganda, not only for advocating an almost unknown idea, but also for counteracting the powerful Bolshevik activity and propaganda. *In the fifth month of a great revolution, no Anarchist newspaper, no Anarchist voice was making itself heard in the capital of the country. And this in the face of the almost unlimited activity of the Bolsheviki!* Such was my observation.

It was not until August, and with great difficulty, that a little group of Anarcho-Syndicalists, consisting mainly of comrades returned from abroad, finally succeeded in starting a weekly newspaper, *Golos Truda,* The Voice of Labour, in Petrograd. As for oral propaganda, however, there were scarcely three or four comrades in that city capable of performing it. In Moscow the situation was more favourable, for it already had a libertarian daily, published by a fairly large federation, under the title of *Anarchy.* In

the provinces Anarchist forces and propaganda were insignificant.

It was astonishing that in spite of this poverty, and such an unfavourable situation, the Anarchists were able to gain, a little later—and nearly everywhere—a certain influence, forcing the Bolsheviks to combat them with arms in hand, and in some places, for a considerable time. *This rapid and spontaneous success of the Anarchist idea is highly significant.*

When, on my arrival [in Petrograd], some comrades wanted to know my first impressions, I told them this: "Our delay is irreparable. It is as if we had to overtake on foot an express train, which, in the possession of the Bolsheviki, is 100 kilometres ahead of us, and is travelling at the rate of 100 kilometres an hour. We not only have to overtake it, but we must grab hold of it at full speed, hang on, get into it and fight the Bolsheviks, dislodge them, and finally, *not* take over the train, but, what is much more delicate, put it at the disposal of the masses and help them make it go. A miracle is needed for all that to succeed. Our duty is to believe in that miracle and work for its realization."

I may add that such a "miracle" occurred at least twice in the course of the Revolution—first, in Kronstadt at the time of the uprising in March, 1921; and second, in the Ukraine [in the forward sweep of] the mass movement called Makhnovist. These two achievements, [are among the developments that] have been passed over in silence or distorted in the works of ignorant or biased authors. They remain generally unknown to the public.

4. Certain events of the Revolution, cited farther on, prove to us that despite the unfavourable circumstances and the insufficient number of Anarchist *cadres,* the Anarchist idea could have blazed a trail, or even won, *if the mass of Russian workers had had at their disposal, at the very beginning of the Revolution, class organizations that were old, experienced, proven, ready to act on their own, and to put that idea into practice.* But the reality was wholly otherwise. The workers' organizations arose only in the course of the Revolution.

To be sure, they immediately made a prodigious spurt numerically. Rapidly the whole country was covered with a vast network of unions, factory committees, Soviets, et cetera. But these organizations came into being with neither preparation nor preliminary activity, without experience, without a clear ideology,

without independent initiative. They had no historical tradition, no competence, no notion of their rôle, their task, their true mission. The libertarian idea was unknown to them. Under these conditions they were condemned to be taken in tow, from the beginning, by the political parties. And later the Bolsheviks saw to it that the weak Anarchist forces would be unable to enlighten them to the necessary degree.

The libertarian groups, as such, could only be transmitters of ideas. In order that those ideas be applied to life, "receiving" sets were needed: workers' organizations ready to get these idea-waves, "receive" them, and put them into practice. If such organizations had existed, the Anarchists of the corresponding professions would have joined them, and given them their enlightened aid, advice, and example. But in Russia, those "receiving sets" were lacking, and the organizations which arose during the Revolution could not fulfil this purpose [with the needed swiftness]. The Anarchist ideas. although they were broadcast energetically by a few "transmitters", were "lost in the air" without being received effectively. So they had no practical results.

Under these conditions, in order that the Anarchist idea might blaze a trail and win, it would have been necessary either that Bolshevism didn't exist, or that the Bolsheviks acted as Anarchists —or that the Revolution had left sufficient time to the libertarians and the working masses to permit the workers' organizations to receive that idea and become capable of achieving it before being swallowed up and subjugated by the Bolshevik State. This latter possibility did not occur, the Bolsheviki having swallowed the workers' organizations, and blocked the way for the Anarchists, before the former could familiarize themselves with Anarchist concepts, oppose this seizure, and orient the Revolution in a libertarian direction.

The absence of these "receiving sets", that is, of workers' organizations, socially ready to receive and carry out, from the start, the Anarchist idea, (and then, the lack of time needed to create such "receiving sets")—this absence, in my opinion, was one of the principal reasons for the failure of Anarchism in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

5. Another factor which we will glance at, and the impor-

tance of which is not inconsiderable, despite its subjective character, could be added to the preceding one. *It aggravated it and rendered it completely fatal to the Revolution.*

There was a simple and speedy method available to eliminate the effects of the backwardness of the masses, to make up for lost time, to fill in the gaps. That was to leave the field free for the libertarian propaganda and movement, since, after the fall of the last Kerensky government, freedom of speech, organization, and action were definitely achieved by the Revolution.

Knowing of the absence of workers' organizations, and of a widespread libertarian propaganda and Anarchist knowledge before the Revolution, enables us to understand why the masses entrusted their fate to a political party and a power, thus repeating the fundamental error of previous revolutions. Under the existing conditions, *the beginning* was *objectively* inevitable. But subsequent developments were not in the least inevitable.

Let me explain.

A *true* revolution can only take its flight, evolve, attain its objectives, if it has an environment of the free circulation of revolutionary ideas concerning the course to follow, and the problems to be solved. This liberty is as indispensable to the Revolution as air is to respiration.[1] That is why, among other things, the dictatorship of a party, a dictatorship which leads inevitably to the suppression of *all* freedom of speech, press, organization, and action —even for the revolutionary tendencies, except for the party in power—is *fatal* to true revolution.

In social matters, no one can pretend to possess the whole truth, or to be immune from self-deception. Those who do so pretend—whether they call themselves Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, or anything else—and who, once in power, destroy, on the

[1] Some individuals pretend that freedom of ideas is a *danger* to the Revolution. But from the moment that the armed forces are *with the revolutionary people* (otherwise the Revolution could not take place) and the people themselves control them, what danger could an opinion have? And then, if the workers *themselves* are guarding the Revolution, they will know how to defend themselves against any *real* danger better than an "extinguisher".

strength of this pretension, other ideas, inevitably establish a kind of *social inquisition.* And like all inquisitions, they stifle all truth, all justice, all progress, life, man, the very breath of the Revolution. Only the free exchange of revolutionary ideas, the multiform collective thought, with its law of natural selection, can keep us from error and prevent us from going astray. Those who do not recognize this are simply *bad individualists* while pretending to be Socialists, collectivists, Communists, et cetera.

These truths are so clear and natural in our days—I might even say *evident*—that one is really uncomfortable in having to insist on them. It is necessary to be both blind and deaf, or of bad faith, to fail to understand them. Yet Lenin, and others with him, undoubtedly sincere, renounced them. The fallibility of the human mind. And as for those who blindly followed the "chiefs", they recognized their error too late. By that time the Inquisition was functioning at full steam; it had its "apparatus" and its coercive forces. And the masses "obeyed" as they were accustomed to, or were, once more, powerless to alter the situation. The Revolution was corrupted, turned from its course, and the correct way was lost. "Everything disgusts me so much," Lenin admitted to his comrades one day, seeing what was going on around him, "that, despite my illness, I would like to leave it all and flee." Had he understood?

If, once in power, the Bolshevik Party had, we won't say encouraged (that would have been too much to ask), but *only allowed freedom of speech and organization to the libertarians, the retardation would have been quickly made up for and the gaps filled in.* As will be seen, *the facts prove this irrefutably.* The long and difficult struggle which the Bolsheviks had to carry on against Anarchism, despite its weakness, alone permits one to conjecture the success that the Anarchists might have achieved if they had had freedom of speech and action.

But, precisely because of the initial successes of the libertarian movement, and because free Anarchist activity infallibly would have given rise to the idea that all political parties and all power were useless, which would have led to the Bolshevik Party's elimination, the latter could not permit this liberty. To tolerate Anarchist propaganda would have been equivalent to suicide for the Bolsheviki. *They did their best to prevent, then to forbid, and*

finally to suppress by brute force, any manifestation of libertarian concepts.

It is frequently contended that the labouring masses are incapable of achieving a revolution for themselves, freely. This thesis is particularly dear to the "Communists", for it permits them to invoke an "objective" situation necessarily leading to repression of the "wicked utopian Anarchists". (Since the masses are incompetent, they say, an "Anarchist revolution" would mean the death of the Revolution). But this thesis is absolutely gratuitous. Let them furnish *proof* of such alleged incapacity of the masses. One can search history without finding a single example *where the masses were really left to act freely* (while being helped, naturally), which would be the only way of *proving* their incapacity.

This experiment never has been tried—and for reasons easy to understand. (It would, however, be simple). For it is well known that that thesis is false, and the experiment would put an end to exploitation of the people and to authority, based, no matter what its form, *not* on the incapacity of the masses, but only on violation and deception. That is why, moreover, that eventually the labouring masses will be driven historically to *take* their liberty of action through a revolution, *a true one*—for the dominators (they are always at the same time exploiters, or are in the service of an exploiting class) will never *give* it, no matter what their label.

The fact that they [the mass of workers] have always entrusted their fate, until the present, to parties, to governments, to leaders—a fact that all the dominators and potential exploiters use to advantage for *subjugating* the masses—may be explained by several circumstances which we don't have to analyze here, and which have nothing to do with the capacity or incapacity of the multitude. This fact proves, if one wishes, the credulity, the heedlessness, of the masses, their unawareness of their own strength, but not at all their incapacity, that is, the absence of that strength.

"Incapacity of the masses". What a tool for all exploiters and dominators, past, present, and future, and especially for the modern aspiring enslavers, whatever their insignia—Nazism, Bolshevism, Fascism, or Communism. "Incapacity of the masses" There is a point on which the reactionaries of all colours are in perfect agreement with the "Communists". And this agreement is exceedingly significant.

Let the "capable" and infallible leaders of our time permit the labouring masses, on the day after the coming Revolution, to act freely, while simply helping them where there is need. They will soon see whether the masses are "incapable" of acting without political protectors. We can assure them that the Revolution will then lead to another result than that of 1917, with its Fascism and unending war.

Alas, we know in advance that they never will dare such an experiment. And the masses again have a special task to perform: that of eliminating in full consciousness and in an opportune time, all the "aspirants", of taking the work into their own hands, and carrying it out in full independence. Let us hope that this time the task will be done.

Accordingly the reader will understand why the propaganda of Anarchist ideas, trying to destroy the credulity of the masses, make them conscious of their own strength, and give them confidence in themselves, was considered, at all times and in all countries, as the most dangerous. It has been repressed, and its protagonists pursued, with exceptional promptness and severity, by all reactionary governments.

In Russia this savage repression rendered the spread of libertarian concepts—already so difficult under existing circumstances—almost impossible up to the advent of the Revolution. Then the Anarchists were allowed a certain degree of freedom of action. But we have seen that under the provisional governments from February to October, 1917, the Anarchist movement still could not accomplish much. And as for the Bolsheviks, they were no exceptions to the rule. As soon as they achieved power, they undertook the suppression of libertarians by every means at their disposal: slanders, traps and ambushes, prohibitions, searches, arrests, acts of violence, destruction of meeting places, assassinations—anything was acceptable to them. And when they felt that their power was sufficiently consolidated, they launched *a general and decisive* repression against the Anarchists. This began in April, 1918, and has never let up until the present. Farther on the reader will find details of this "feat of valour" by the Bolsheviki, almost unknown outside of Russia.

Thus Anarchist activity could only be carried on in approximate freedom for some six months. It is hardly astonishing that

the libertarian movement did not have time to organize, to expand, to get rid of, in growing, its weakness and faults. All the more reason that it lacked time to reach the masses and make itself known to them. It remained to the end, shut up in a "closed vessel". It was killed in the egg, without being able to break the shell. (This was, objectively, not impossible).

Such was the second principal reason for its failure.

It is necessary to underline here the *capital importance*—for the Revolution—of what we have just stated.

The Bolsheviks wiped out Anarchism *deliberately, aggressively.* Taking advantage of the circumstances, and of their hold upon the masses, they savagely suppressed the libertarian idea and the movements which supported it. They did not let Anarchism *exist,* still less go to the masses. Later they had the impudence to maintain, for political reasons, that Anarchism had failed "ideologically", the masses having understood and rejected its "anti-proletarian doctrine". Abroad, all those who like to be fooled took them at their word. The "Communists" also pretend, as we have said, that since Anarchism, in opposing Bolshevism, did not have "objectively" any chance of steering the Revolution onto its course, it put it in danger and showed itself as being objectively "counter-revolutionary", and therefore had to be fought without softness. They took care not to say that it was precisely they who, very "subjectively", took away from the Anarchists—and from the masses—the last chance, the very real means, and the concrete possibility of success.

In wiping out the libertarian movement, *in destroying the free movements of the masses,* the Bolsheviki, *ipso facto,* stopped and stifled the Revolution.

Unable to advance further towards the real emancipation of the masses, for which had been substituted a dominating statism, inevitably bureaucratic and exploitive, and "neo-capitalist", the *real* Revolution inevitably had to recede. For *all unfulfilled revolutions,* that is to say, those which do not lead to genuine and complete emancipation of labour, *are condemned to recede,* in one way or another. History teaches us this. And the Russian Revolution confirms it. But those who don't want to listen or see, are slow to understand it.

Some persist in believing in an authoritarian revolution, while others end by despairing of all revolutions, instead of seeking for the *why* of the failure. Still others—and these, alas, are the most numerous—don't want to listen or look. They imagine that they will be able to "live their lives" away from and sheltered from the far-sweeping social backwaters. They are indifferent to the social whole, and seek to intrench themselves in their own miserable individual existence, unconscious of the enormous obstacle that they present, by their attitude, to human progress and their own *real* well-being. They believe anything and follow anything provided they are "left in peace". They hope thus to be able to "save themselves" in the midst of the cataclysm. A fundamental and fatal error and illusion. However, the truth is simple: so long as the labour of man is not free of all exploitation by man, *no one* can speak of real life, real progress, or real personal well-being.

FOR THOUSANDS of years three principal conditions have prevented the existence of free labour, and therefore "fraternity" and human well-being: 1. The state of technology—man did not possess the vast forces of Nature of which he is now master. 2. The state of economic affairs which resulted from this—the insufficiency of the products of human labour, and, as a consequence, an "exchange economy", money, profit; in short, the capitalist system of production and distribution, based on the scarcity of manufactured products.[1] 3. The *moral* factor, which, in its turn, followed the first two—ignorance, brutalization, submission, resignation of the masses.

But for several decades the first two conditions cited have been greatly modified. Technologically and economically, free labour is now not only possible, but indispensable for the normal life and evolution of man. The capitalist and authoritarian system can no longer insure either one or the other; it can only produce wars. Only the morale is inadequate: accustomed for millennia to resignation and submission, the immense majority of men will not see the true path which is open before them; they still do not perceive the action which history imposes on them. As before,

[1] Readers who wish to investigate the problem of modern economic evolution should consult especially the works of Jacques Duboin.

they "follow" and "submit", lending their enormous energy to acts of war and senseless destruction, instead of realizing that, under modern conditions, their free creative activity would be crowned with success. It will be necessary that *the force of events,* wars, calamities of all sorts, abortive and repeated revolutions, occurring without interruption, taking from them all possibility of living, finally will open their eyes to the truth and will consecrate their energy to real human action, free, constructive, and benevolent.

We must add, in passing, that in our time, the Revolution and reaction will, in the consequences, inevitably be world-wide. Moreover, in 1789 the French Revolution and the reaction which followed it made resounding echoes and motivated important movements in several countries. If the Russian Revolution, continuing to march forward, had become the great emancipating revolution, peoples in other lands would have followed it presently and in the same direction. In that event it would have been, in fact and not just on paper, a powerful beacon lighting up the true path for humanity.

On the contrary, distorted, and stopped in full retreat, it served admirably the purposes of world reaction, which was awaiting its hour. (The great moguls of reaction are more perspicacious than the revolutionists). The illusion, the myth, the slogans, the trimmings, and the waste paper remained, but *real* life, which has no use for illusions, trimmings, and waste paper, pursued a wholly different route. Hence the reaction and its far-reaching consequences: Fascism, new wars, and economic and social catastrophes, became almost inevitable.

In this situation, the fundamental—and well-known—error of Lenin is curious and suggestive. He expected a rapid extension of the "Communist" revolution to other countries. But his hopes were in vain. However, fundamentally, he did not deceive himself: the true Revolution will "set fire to the world". Yes, a *true* revolution would have set the world afire. Only his revolution was not a *true* one. And that Lenin did not see. It was in this respect that he deceived himself. Blinded by his statist doctrine, fascinated by "victory", he did not and could not realize that it was a miscarried, strayed revolution; that it was going to remain sterile; that it could "set fire" to nothing, for it had ceased to

"burn" itself; that it had lost the power of spreading, a characteristic of great causes, because it had ceased to be a great cause.

Could he see, in his blindness, that this revolution was going to stop, retreat, degenerate, give rise to victorious reaction in other countries after a few abortive uprisings? Of course not. And he committed a second error: He believed that the ultimate fate of the Russian Revolution depended upon its extension to other countries. Exactly the opposite was true: extension of the Revolution depended upon the results of the revolution in Russia.

These results being vague and uncertain, the labouring masses abroad hesitated, inquired, waited for details. But the information and other indicative elements became more and more obscure and contradictory. The inquiries and delegations met with no definite data. Meanwhile the negative testimonials [about what was happening among the Russians] accumulated. The European masses temporized, did not dare, were mistrustful or uninterested. The necessary spirit was lacking in them, and the cause remained in doubt. Then came the disagreements and the schisms. All this played into the hands of the reaction. It prepared, organized, acted.

Lenin's successors had to accept the evidence. Without perhaps discerning the true cause, they understood intuitively that conditions were not propitious for an *extension* of the "Communist" Revolution, but that there was a vast *reaction* against it. They understood that this reaction would be dangerous for them, for their Revolution, such as it was, could not be imposed upon the world. So they set feverishly to work preparing for future wars, henceforth inevitable. From now, this was the only course for them to follow. And for history, too!

It is curious to observe that, subsequently, the "Communists" tried to explain the lack of success and mistakes of the Revolution by invoking "the capitalist encirclement", the inaction of the proletariat of other countries, and the strength of world reaction. They did not suspect—or did not admit—that the weakness of the foreign workers and the spreading of the reaction were, to a large extent, the natural consequences of the false route on which they themselves had put the Revolution; and that, in diverting it, they *themselves* had prepared the road for reaction, for Fascism, and for war.

Such is the tragic truth of the Bolshevik Revolution. Such is its principal lesson for the workers of the world. Fundamentally, it is simple, clear, and indisputable. However, it is still neither established nor even known. It will become so in proportion to events, and as the free study of the Russian Revolution develops.

Let us not be deceived about the fate of the coming Revolution! It has before it only two courses: either that of the genuine Social Revolution which will lead to *the real emancipation of the workers* (and which is objectively possible), or, again, that of the political, statist, and authoritarian impasse, leading inevitably to a new reaction, new wars, and catastrophes of all sorts.

Human evolution does not stop. It blazes a trail through, over, or around any obstacles. In our day, capitalist, authoritarian, and political society completely *forbids it in advance*. That society must therefore disappear now, in one way or another. If again this time the people do not know how *really to transform it* and *at the moment of the Revolution*, the unavoidable consequence will be a new reaction, a new war, and terrible economic and social cataclysms; in short, the continuation of total destruction, *until the people understand and act accordingly*. For, in this case, human evolution will have no other way of blazing a trail.[1]

We mention finally an element which, without having the importance of the factors already cited, nevertheless played a notable rôle in the tragedy of the Russian Revolution. It has to do with "publicity" or demagogy. Like all political parties, the Bolshevik Party [now the "Communist" Party] used and abused such means. To impress the masses, to "conquer" them, it made use of display, publicity, and bluff. Moreover, it put itself, in any way it could, on top of a mountain so that the crowd could see it, hear it, and admire it. All this gave it strength for the moment.

But such methods are foreign to the libertarian movement, which, by reason of its very essence, is more anonymous, discreet,

[1] See, in this connection, the author's *Choses Vecues*, a first brief study of the Russian Revolution, in *La Revue Anarchiste* of Sebastian Faure, [Paris?] 1922-24.

modest, quiet. This fact increased its temporary weakness. Refusing to *lead* the masses, working to awaken their consciousness, and depending on their free and direct action, it was obliged to renounce demagogy and work in the shadows, preparing for the future, without seeking to impose authority.

Such was its situation in Russia.

Here I would like to leave the field of concrete facts for a few minutes, and to attempt a short incursion into "philosophical" territory.

The basic idea of Anarchism is simple: no party, political or ideological group, placed above or outside the labouring masses to "govern" or "guide" them ever succeeds in emancipating them, even if it sincerely desires to do so. Effective emancipation can be achieved only by the *direct, widespread, and independent action of those concerned, of the workers themselves,* grouped, not under the banner of a political party or of an ideological formation, but in their own class organizations (productive workers' unions, factory committees, co-operatives, et cetera) on the basis of concrete action and self-government, *helped, but not governed,* by revolutionaries working in the very midst of, and not above the mass and the professional, technical, defence, and other branches.

All political or ideological grouping which seeks to "guide" the masses toward their emancipation by the political or governmental route, are taking a false trail, leading to failure and ending inevitably by installing a new system of economic and social privileges, thus giving rise, under another aspect, to a régime of oppression and exploitation for the workers—therefore another variety of capitalism—instead of helping the Revolution to direct them to their emancipation.

This thesis necessarily leads to another: The Anarchist idea and the true emancipating revolution cannot be achieved by *the Anarchists as such,* but only by the vast masses concerned—the Anarchists, or rather, the revolutionaries in general, being called in only to enlighten and aid them under certain circumstances. If the Anarchists pretended to be able to achieve the Social Revolution by "guiding" the masses, such a pretension would be an illusion, as was that of the Bolsheviki, and for the same reason.

That is not all. In view of the immensity—one might say the

universality—and the nature of the task, the working class alone cannot lead the true Revolution to a satisfactory conclusion. If it has the pretentiousness of acting alone and imposing itself upon the other elements of the population by dictatorship, and forcibly making them follow it, it will meet with the same failure. One must understand nothing about social phenomena nor of the nature of men and things to believe the contrary.

Also, at the beginning of such a struggle for effective emancipation, history necessarily takes an entirely different course.

Three conditions are indispensable—in the following order of importance—for a revolution to succeed conclusively.

1. It is necessary that great masses—millions of persons in several countries—driven by imperative necessity, participate in it of their own free will.

2. That, by reason of this fact, the more advanced elements, the revolutionists, part of the working class, *et al.*, do not have recourse to coercive measures of a political nature.

3. That for these two reasons, the huge "neutral" mass, carried without compulsion by the far-sweeping current, by the free enthusiasm of millions of humans, and by the first positive results of this gigantic movement, accept of their own free will the *fait accompli* and come over more and more to the side of the true revolution.

Thus the achievement of the true emancipating revolution requires the active participation, the strict collaboration, conscious and without reservations, of millions of men of all social conditions, declassed, unemployed, levelled, and thrown into the Revolution by the force of events.

But, in order that these millions of men be driven into a place from which there is no escape, it is necessary above everything else that this force dislodge them from the beaten track of their daily existence. And for this to happen, it is necessary that this existence, the existing society itself, become impossible; *that it be ruined from top to bottom—its economy, its social régime, its politics, its manners, customs, and prejudices.*

Such is the course history takes when the times are ripe for the *true* revolution, for *true* emancipation.

It is here that we touch upon the heart of the problem.

I think that in Russia this destruction had not gone far enough.

Thus the political idea had not been destroyed, which permitted the Bolsheviks to take power, impose their dictatorship, and consolidate themselves. Other false principles and prejudices likewise remained.

The destruction which had preceded the revolution of 1917 was sufficient to stop the war and modify the forms of power and capitalism. But it was not sizeable enough to destroy them *in their very essence,* to impel millions of men to abandon the false modern social principles (State, politics, power, government, et cetera) and act themselves on completely new bases, and have done forever with capitalism and power, *in all their previous forms.*

This insufficiency of destruction was, in my opinion, the fundamental cause which arrested the Russian Revolution and led to its deformation by the Bolsheviki. [1]

It is here that the "philosophical" question arises.

The following reasoning appears quite plausible:

"If, truly, the insufficiency of the preliminary destruction prevented the masses from achieving their revolution, this element, in fact, over-rides and sweeps away everything, and explains everything. In this case, were not the Bolsheviks right in taking power and pushing the Revolution as far as possible, thus barring the way to reaction? Was not their action historically justified, with its methods and consequences?"

To that I reply:

In the first place, it is necessary to define the problem. Fundamentally, were the labouring masses capable of continuing the Revolution and building the new society themselves, by means of their class organizations, which were created by the Revolution, and with the help of the revolutionists?

The real problem is there.

If the answer is *no,* then one can understand why someone might try to justify the Bolsheviki, [2] without, however, being able

[1] All these ideas are developed more fully in my study mentioned carlier: *Choses Vecues.*

[2] As the reader will see, I do *not* mean that in this case the Bolsheviks *were* justified. Those who would maintain that they were must prove that they did not have any other way of acting in order to prepare the masses,

to pretend that their revolution was the *true* revolution, or that their procedure was justified where the masses were capable of acting by themselves. But if the answer is *yes*, then they are irrevocably condemned "without extenuating circumstances", whatever the circumstances and the momentary mistakes of the masses may have been.

In speaking of the insufficiency of destruction, we meant by that especially the evil survival of the political idea. This not having been nullified in advance, the masses, victorious in February, 1917, entrusted the fate of the Revolution subsequently to a party, that is to say, to new masters, instead of getting rid of all pretenders, whatever their label, and taking the Revolution entirely into their own hands. Thus they repeated the fundamental error of previous revolutions. But this erroneous act had nothing to do with the *capacity or incapacity of the masses.*

Let us suppose for the moment that there had been no one to profit from that error. Would the masses have been capable of carrying the Revolution to its final goal—to effective, complete emancipation? To this question I reply categorically: *Yes.* I even maintain that the labouring masses were *the only ones capable* of leading it there. I hope that the reader will find irrefutable proof of that in this work. And, if this affirmation is correct, then *the political factor was not in the least necessary for preventing reaction, continuing the Revolution,* and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

2. Let us point out now that our thesis is confirmed by a significant fact, details of which will be given later. In the course of the Revolution, many Russians *recognized their error.* (The political principle began to fade). They wanted to correct it, to act themselves, to get rid of the pretentious and ineffectual guardianship of the party in power. Here and there they even set to work. But instead of being pleased with this, of encouraging

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progressively, to achieve a free and total revolution. I am emphatically of the opinion that they could have found other methods. But I am not much concerned with that aspect of the question. Considering the thesis of the incapacity of the masses as being absolutely false, and considering that the facts set forth in this work prove it abundantly, I have no reason to envisage a situation which, to me, simply did not exist.

them, or of helping them along that course, as true revolutionists would have done, the Bolsheviki opposed that tendency by unprecedented deceit, violence, and a profusion of military and terrorist exploits. *Having discovered their error, the revolutionary masses wished to act themselves and felt that they were capable of doing so. The Bolsheviks broke their spirit by force.*

3. It follows, irrefutably, that the Bolsheviki did not "push the Revolution as far as possible". Retaining power, with all its forces and advantages, they, on the contrary, *kept it down.* And, subsequently, having taken over the capitalist property, they succeeded, after a fierce struggle against popular total revolution, in turning it to their own advantage, restoring under another form the capitalist exploitation of the masses. (Wherever men do not work under conditions of freedom, the system is necessarily capitalistic, though the form may vary).

4. Thus it is clear that it was not at all a question of justification, but only an historical explanation of the triumph of Bolshevism over the libertarian conception in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

5. It follows also that the real "historical meaning" of Bolshevism is purely negative. It is another lesson from experience, demonstrating to the labouring masses *how not to wage a revolution* —a lesson which completely condemns the political idea. Under the conditions existing [in Russia in 1917] such a lesson was almost inevitable, *but not at all indispensable.* Acting in another manner (which, theoretically, would not have been impossible), the Bolsheviks could have avoided it. So they have no right to be proud of themselves, nor to pose as saviours.

6. This lesson also emphasizes other important points:

a. The historical evolution of humanity has reached a stage where continuity of progress requires *free* labour, exempt from all submission, from all constraint, from all exploitation of man by man. Economically, technically, socially, and even morally, *such labour is, from now on, not only possible but historically indispensable.* The "lever" of this vast social transformation (of which, through several decades, we have been experiencing the tragic convulsions) is the Revolution. To be truly progressive and "justified" that revolution must necessarily lead to a system in

which human labour will be effectively and totally emancipated.

b. In order that the labouring masses may pass from slave labour to free labour, they must, from the beginning of the Revolution, carry it out themselves, in full freedom, in complete independence. Only on this condition can they, concretely and immediately, take in hand the task which is now imposed upon them by history—the building of a society based on emancipated labour.

All modern revolutions which are not carried out by the masses themselves will not lead to the historically indicated result. So they will be neither progressive nor "justified" but perverted, turned from their true course, and finally lost. Led by new masters and guardians, again kept from all initiative and from all essentially free responsible activity, and compelled as in the past to follow docilely this "'chief" or that "guide" who has imposed himself on them, the labouring masses will revert to their time-honoured habit of "following" and will remain an "amorphous herd", submissive and shorn. And the *true* revolution simply will not be accomplished.

7. Of course it might still be said to me:

"Suppose for the moment that you are right on certain points. It is none the less true that, though the preliminary destruction was, in your opinion, insufficient, *the total Revolution,* in the libertarian sense of the term, *was objectively impossible.* Consequently what happened was, historically at least, *inevitable,* and the libertarian idea could only have been a utopian dream. Its utopianism might have put the whole Revolution in danger. The Bolsheviks knew this and acted accordingly. That is their justification."

The reader may have noticed that I invariably say: "*almost* inevitable". I use "almost" deliberately. From my pen this word takes on a special importance.

Naturally, in principle, the general objective factors outweigh all others. In the phase we are considering, the insufficiency of the preliminary destruction—and the survival of the political principle—would, objectively, lead to the accession of Bolshevism. But in the human world the problem of "factors" becomes exceedingly delicate. The objective factors dominate it, not in an absolute manner, but only to a certain degree, and the subjective factors play an important rôle.

What exactly is this rôle, and to what extent is it significant? We do not know. The rudimentary state of the sciences of man do not permit us to define [the two rôles] precisely. And the task is all the more arduous in that neither of the two is fixed, but that both are, on the contrary, infinitely mobile and variable. (This problem is one of free will). How and to what extent does "determinism" prevail over the "free will" of man? Inversely: in what sense and to what degree does "free will" exist and how does it extricate itself from the hold of "determinism"? In spite of the researches of many thinkers we still do not know.

What we do know perfectly is that subjective factors hold an important place in human affairs—to such an extent that sometimes they overcome the apparently "inevitable" effects of the objective factors, especially when the former are connected in a certain way.

Let us cite a modern example, striking and universally known.

In the war of 1914-18, Germany, objectively, should have defeated France. And, in fact, scarcely a month after the beginning of hostilities, the German Army was under the walls of Paris. One after another, the battles were lost by the French. France was "almost inevitably" going to be conquered. (If it had been, it would have been easy to say later, with a "scientific" manner, that this was "historically and objectively indispensable"). Then there occurred a series of purely subjective developments. They linked together and destroyed the effects of the objective factors.

Too confident of the crushing superiority of his forces and carried away by the enthusiasm of his victorious troops, General von Kluck, who commanded the Kaiser's Army, neglected to cover his right wing adequately—this was the first purely subjective factor. (Another general, or even von Kluck at another time, might have covered that wing).

General Galliéni, military commander of Paris, observed this error of von Kluck, and proposed to Generalissimo Joffre that the uncovered wing be attacked with all the forces available, notably those of the Paris garrison. This was the second subjective circumstance—for it required the discernment and the will of Galliéni to make such a resolution and risk such a responsibility. Another general—or even Galliéni at another moment—might have been neither so discerning nor so determined.

Joffre accepted Galliéni's plan and ordered the attack. This

was the third subjective fact—for it needed the good will and other moral qualities of Joffre to accept that proposal. Another generalissimo, haughty and jealous of his prerogatives, might have replied to Galliéni: "You are the commander in Paris. So tend to your own affairs and don't meddle in what is not within your province."

Finally, the strange fact that the discussions between Galliéni and Joffre were not intercepted by the German high command, usually well informed about what occurred on the French side, must also be added to this chain of subjective factors, a chain which led to the French victory and which was decisive for the issues of the war.

Themselves aware of the objective improbability of this victory, the French characterized it as "the miracle of the Marne". But it was not a miracle. It was simply a rather unusual event, unexpected and "imponderable", growing out of a group of subjective factors which overcame the objective elements.

It was in the same sense that I said to my comrades in Russia in 1917: "A 'miracle' is needed for the libertarian idea to overcome Bolshevism in this revolution. We must believe in this miracle and work for its realization."

By that I meant that only an unforeseen and imponderable play of subjective factors could militate against the crushing objective weight of Bolshevism. This did not occur. But what is important is that *it could have occurred.* And let us recall that *it almost occurred twice*—once at the time of the Kronstadt uprising in March, 1921, and in the course of the severe fighting between the new authorities and the Anarchist masses in the Ukraine in 1919-1921.

Thus in the human world "absolute objective inevitability" does not exist. At any moment purely human, subjective factors can intervene and override [any such abstraction].

The Anarchist conception, as solidly and "scientifically" established as that of the Bolsheviks, (the latter conception also was treated as utopian by its opponents, on the eve of the Revolution) *exists.* Its fate, in the course of the next revolution, depends on a highly complicated interplay of all sorts of factors, objective and subjective, the latter especially being infinitely varied, mobile, changeable, unforeseeable, and intangible—a play, the result of which can never be "objectively inevitable".

Concluding on this point, I repeat that the insufficiency of destruction was the fundamental cause of the triumph of Bolshevism over Anarchism in the 1917 Russian Revolution. It goes without saying that this was the case, and that it is being discussed here because *the play of various other factors did not efface either the cause or the effect.* But it could have been otherwise. And who knows what subjective factors played a part in the triumph of Bolshevism?

To be sure, the discrediting *in advance* of the evil political chimera of authoritarian "Communism" would have assured, facilitated, and accelerated the realization of the libertarian principle. But in a general way, *the insufficiency of this discrediting at the beginning of the Revolution did not at all signify the inevitable eclipse of Anarchism.*

The complex play of various factors may have unexpected results. It may end by suppressing cause and effect. *The political and authoritarian idea, the statist conception, might have been destroyed in the course of the Revolution, and this would have left the field free for the achievement of the Anarchist concept.*

Like all revolutions, that of 1917 had two roads before it:

1. That of *the true Revolution of the masses,* leading directly to their complete emancipation. If this road had been taken, the prodigious enthusiasm and the *definitive* result of such a revolution would have effectively "shaken the world". Probably all reaction would have been impossible from then on; and all dissension among the social movements would have been prevented in advance by the force of the *fait accompli.* Finally, the ferment which followed the Russian Revolution in Europe probably would have led to the same definitive result.

2. That of the *unachieved* Revolution. In that case, history would have had only one way of continuing: retreat to world-wide reaction, world-wide catastrophe (war), total destruction of the existing society, and, in the last analysis, resumption of the Revolution by the masses themselves, actually achieving their emancipation.

In principle, the two roads were possible. But the totality of factors present rendered the second road much more probable.

It was the second, in fact, that was followed by the 1917 Revolution.

But the first is the one that should be taken by the next revolution.

And now, our philosophical parenthesis concluded, let us return to the events [involved in all this].

PART II

ABOUT THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

CHAPTER 1
Bolsheviks and Anarchists Before October

HERE WE find occasion to go back and review the respective positions of the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists prior to the October Revolution.

The position of the Bolsheviki on the eve of that revolution was characteristic.

It is well to recall, however, that Lenin's ideology and the position of his party had changed considerably since 1900. Aware that the Russian labouring masses, once started in revolt, would go far and would not stop at a bourgeois solution—especially in a country where the bourgeoisie hardly existed as a class—Lenin and his party, in their desire to anticipate and dominate the masses in order to lead them, ended by formulating an extremely advanced revolutionary programme. They now envisaged a strictly Socialist revolution. And they arrived at an almost libertarian conception of the revolution, with almost Anarchist slogans—except, of course, with regard to the fundamental point of demarcation—the taking of power and the problem of the State.

When I read the writings of Lenin, especially those after 1914, I observed a perfect parallelism between his ideas and those of the Anarchists, except for the idea of the State and power. This identity of understanding, recognition, and prediction seemed to me already very dangerous for the *true* cause of the Revolution. For—I did not fool myself—under the pen, in the mouths, and in the acts, of the Bolsheviks, all these great ideas were without real life, without a future. These writings and these words, fascinating and overpowering, would remain without serious consequences, because the subsequent acts [of the Bolsheviki] certainly were not going to correspond to their theories.

But I was sure that, on the one hand, the masses, in view of the weakness of the Anarchist movement, would blindly follow the

Bolsheviks, and that, on the other hand, the latter inevitably would deceive the masses and mislead them into an evil course. For beyond any doubt they would distort and pervert their proclaimed principles.

That is what happened in fact.

In order to quicken the spirit of the masses, and gain their sympathy and confidence, the Bolshevik Party launched, with all the strength of its agitational and propaganda apparatus, slogans which until then had particularly and insistently been voiced by the Anarchists:

Long live the Social Revolution!
Down with the war! Immediate peace!

And especially:

The land to the peasants!
The factories to the workers!

The labouring masses swiftly seized upon these slogans, which expressed their real aspirations perfectly.

From the lips and under the pens of the Anarchists, those slogans were sincere and concrete, for they corresponded to their principles and called for action entirely in conformity with such principles. But with the Bolsheviks, the same slogans meant practical solutions totally different from those of the libertarians, and did not at all tally with the ideas which the words appeared to express. For the Bolsheviki, they were *only* slogans.

Social Revolution meant for the Anarchists *a really social act*: a transformation which would take place outside of all political and statist organizations, and all out-moded social systems—both governmental and authoritarian.

But the Bolsheviks pretended to wage the Revolution specifically with the aid of an omnipotent State, of an all-powerful government, of dictatorial power.

If a revolution did not abolish the State, the government, and politics, the Anarchists did not consider it a social revolution, but simply a political revolution—which of course might be more or less coloured by social elements.

But achievement of power and organization of "their" govern-

ment and "their" State spelled the Social Revolution for the "Communists" [the label which the Bolsheviki adopted later].

In the minds of the Anarchists, social revolution meant *destruction of the State and capitalism at the same time,* and the birth of a new society based on another form of social organization.

For the Bolsheviks, social revolution meant, on the contrary, the *resurrection of the State* after the abolition of the bourgeois State—that is to say, the creation of a powerful new State for the purpose of "constructing Socialism".

The Anarchists held it impossible to institute Socialism by means of the State.

The Bolsheviki maintained that it could be achieved only through the State.

This difference of interpretation was, as will readily be seen, fundamental.

(I recall big posters on a wall in Petrograd, at the time of the October Revolution, announcing lectures by Trotsky on *The Organization of Power.* "A typical and fatal error," I said to comrades, "for if it is a question of social revolution, one should be concerned with organizing the Revolution and not with organizing power.")

Respective interpretation of the call for *immediate peace* also was notably different.

To the Anarchists that slogan was a call for direct action by the armed masses themselves, over the heads of the governors, the politicians, and the generals. According to the anarchists, those masses should leave the front and return to the country, thus proclaiming to the world their refusal to fight stupidly for the interests of the capitalists and their disgust with the shameful butchery. Such a gesture, frank, integrated, decisive—the Anarchists believed—would produce an enormous effect upon the soldiers of the other nations, and might lead, in the last analysis, to the end of the war, perhaps even to its transformation into a world revolution. They thought that it was necessary, taking advantage of the immensity of Russia, to draw the enemy on, cut him off from his bases, cause his Army to disintegrate, and put him out of the fighting.

The Bolsheviks, however, were afraid of such direct action. Politicians and statists, they wanted a peace through political and

diplomatic channels, the fruit of discussions with the German generals and "plenipotentiaries".

The land to the peasants! the factories to the workers! By these words the Anarchists understood that, without being the property of anyone, the land should be put at the disposal of all those who desired to cultivate it (without exploiting anyone) and of their associations and federations, and that likewise the factories, works, mines, machines, et cetera, should be at the disposal of all the workers' productive associations and their federations. Methods and details of this activity would be regulated by those associations and federations, by free agreement.

But to the Bolsheviki this same slogan meant the *nationalization* of all those elements. For them the land, the works, the factories, the mines, the machines, and the means of transport should be *the property of the State,* which would permit the workers to use them.

Again, the difference of interpretation was fundamental.

As for the masses themselves, intuitively they understood all those slogans rather in the libertarian sense. But, as we have said earlier, the voice of Anarchism was relatively so weak that the vast masses didn't hear it. It seemed to them that only the Bolsheviks dared to proclaim and defend these glorious and just principles. This was all the more true in that the Bolshevik Party proclaimed itself every day on the street corners as being *the only party* struggling for the interests of the city workers and the peasants; the only party which, once in power, would know how to achieve the Social Revolution.

"Workers and peasants! The Bolshevik Party is the only one which defends you. No other party knows how to lead you to victory. Workers and peasants! The Bolshevik Party is your own party. It is the only party that is really yours. Help it to take power and you will triumph."

This *leitmotif* of the Bolshevik propaganda finally became an obsession. Even the left Social Revolutionary Party, which was much stronger than the small Anarchist groups, could not rival the Bolsheviks. However, it was then strong enough so that the Bolsheviki had to reckon with it and offer it, for some time, seats in the government.

Finally, it is interesting to compare the position of the Bolsheviks to that of the Anarchists, on the eve of the October Revolution, *on the question of the workers' soviets.*

The Bolsheviki expected to achieve the Revolution, on the one hand, through an insurrection of these soviets, which were demanding "all power" for themselves, and, on the other hand, through a military insurrection which would support the action of the soviets (the whole proceedings of course under the immediate and effective direction of the party). The working masses had the task of vigorously supporting this action, In perfect accord with their point of view and their "tactics", the Bolsheviks launched the general slogan of the Revolution: *"All power to the Soviets!"*

As for the Anarchists, they were suspicious of this slogan and for good reason—they knew well that that formula did not at all correspond with the real plans of the Bolshevik Party. *They knew that* in the last analysis *the latter sought highly centralized power for itself.* (That is, for its central committee and ultimately for its leader, Lenin, who, aided by Trotsky, as is now generally known, directed all the preparations for the taking of power).

"All power to the Soviets!" was therefore, in reality, according to the Anarchists, only an empty formula, subject to being filled later with any kind of content. And it was a false, hypocritical, deceptive formula—for, the Anarchists declared, if "power" really should belong to the soviets, it could not belong to the Bolshevik Party, and if it should belong to that Party, as the Bolsheviks envisaged, it could not belong to the soviets.

That is why the Anarchists, while admitting that the soviets should perform certain functions in the building of the new society, did not accept the formula without reservations. To them, the word *power* rendered it ambiguous, suspect, illogical, and demagogic. They knew that, by its very nature, political power could not really be exercised except by a very restricted group of men at the centre. Therefore this power—the *real* power—could not belong to the soviets. It would actually be in the hands of the party. Then what did the formula "All power to the Soviets" truly mean?

Comment and doubts having to do with that theme were expressed by the Anarcho-Syndicalists in an editorial entitled *Is*

The first All-Russian Congress of factory and shop committees in Petrograd.

This the End?, published in their weekly, *Golos Truda.*[1] Pointed questions were asked in that editorial.

"Will the eventual realization of the formula, *All power to the Soviets*—rather the eventual taking of political power—*be the end?* Will this be all? Will this act accomplish the destructive work of the Revolution? Will it completely prepare the ground for the great social construction, for the creative spirit of the people in revolt? Will the victory of the 'Soviets'—if it is achieved —and, again, the 'organization of power' which will follow it, effectively signify the victory of *labor, of the organized forces of the workers,* the beginning of genuine Socialist construction?

Will this victory and this new 'power' succeed in leading the Revolution out of the impasse in which it finds itself? Will they manage to open new *creative* horizons for the Revolution, for the masses, for everyone? Are they going to point out *the true course* for the Revolution to constructive work, the effective solution for all the burning questions of the period?"

It would all depend, the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ contended, on what interpretation the conquerors put on the word *power* and their idea of the *organization of power.* It would depend, too, on the way in which the victory would be utilized by the elements holding power after that victory.

Plainly pessimistic, the editors of *Golos Truda* cited several circumstances vitally necessary to a just and equitable handling of the situation by the Bolsheviki. Only *if* certain factors existed, they averred, could the new crisis become the last one; only then could it signify the beginning of a new era. Those factors embodied five *ifs*:

"If by 'power' one wishes to say that all creative work and all organizational activity throughout the whole country will be in the hands of *the workers' and peasants' organizations,* supported by the armed masses;

If one understands by 'power' the full right of these organizations to carry on this activity and to federate to this end . . . thus beginning the new economic and social construction which will lead the Revolution to new horizons of peace, economic equality, and true liberty;

If . . . 'power to the Soviets' does not signify installation of lobbies of a political power . . . ;

[1] Petrograd, October 20, 1917.

If, finally, the political party aspiring to power . . . liquidates itself after the victory and yields its place effectively to a free self-government of the workers; and

If the 'power of the Soviets' does not become, in reality, a statist power of a new political party."

But, the Anarcho-Syndicalists held, if "power" actually meant the activity of the authoritarian and political lobbies of the Bolshevik Party, lobbies directed by its principal authoritarian and political centre (the central power of the party and the State); if the "taking of power by the Soviets" really meant usurpation of power by a new political party, for the purpose of reconstructing, by means of this power, from above and by that "centre", the whole economic and social life of the country, and thus resolving the complex problems of the moment and of the period—*then this new stage of the Revolution would not be the final stage either.*

Golos Truda did not doubt for an instant, it stated, that "this new power" would neither begin nor understand the real Socialist construction, nor even satisfy the immediate essential needs and interests of the population. And it did not doubt that the masses would quickly become disenchanted with their new idols and be forced to turn to other solutions after having disavowed those new gods. Then, after an interval—of uncertain length—the struggle would of necessity begin again. This would be the commencement of the third and last stage of the Russian Revolution—a stage which would be a Great Revolution in itself.

"This will be a struggle [the editorial continued] between the living forces of the creative spirit of the masses, on the one hand, and the Social Democratic power, with its centralist spirit, defending itself bitterly, on the other. In other words: a struggle between the workers' and peasants' organizations acting directly and on their own, taking the land and all the means of production, transport, and distribution, to establish, in complete independence, a really new human existence—this on the one hand, and the Marxist political authority on the other; a struggle between the authoritarian and libertarian systems; a contest between two principles which have been battling for pre-eminence for a long time: the Marxist principle and the Anarchist principle."

And, the Anarcho-Syndicalist editors concluded, *only a complete and definitive victory of the Anarchist principle*—the principle

of the free and natural self-organization of the masses—would spell a true victory for the Great Revolution.

They did not believe, they declared, in the possibility of achieving the Social Revolution through the political process. They did not believe that the work of new social construction, and the solution of the vast, varied, and complex problems of that time could be achieved through a political act, by the taking of power by the top or centre. "Those who live," they predicted, "shall see!"

Mass action before the Winter Palace. Photo appeared in the *One Big Union Monthly.*

CHAPTER 2
Anarchist Position on the October Revolution

On the same day, the Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda published a statement in *Golos Truda* in which it indicated clearly its position on the question of political power. It summed up the situation in two compact paragraphs:

"I. Inasmuch as we give the slogan 'All power to the Soviets', an entirely different meaning from that which, in our opinion, is given by the Social Democratic Bolshevik Party, 'called upon by events to lead the movement'; inasmuch as we do not believe in the broad perspectives of a revolution which begins with a political act, that is, by the taking of power; inasmuch as we do not support any action of the masses for political goals and under the control of a political party; and finally, inasmuch as we conceive of an entirely different way, both for the beginning and the subsequent development of a real social revolution, we do *not* support the present movement.

"2. Nevertheless, if the [proposed] action by the masses should commence, then, as Anarchists, we will participate in it with the greatest possible energy. For we cannot put ourselves out of touch with the revolutionary masses, even if they are not following our course and our appeals, and even if we foresee the defeat of the movement. We never forget that it is impossible to foresee either the direction or the result of a movement by the masses. Consequently, we consider it our duty always to participate in such a movement, seeking to communicate *our* meaning, *our* ideas, *our* truth, to it."

CHAPTER 3
Other Disagreements

BESIDE THE great divergences of principle which separated the Anarchists and the Bolsheviks, there existed differences of detail between them. Let us mention the two most important incidental points of variance—the question of the purported "workers' control of production" and that of the Constituent Assembly.

Contemplating the workers' problem, the Bolshevik Party prepared to begin [moving toward a solution] by instituting the so-called *workers' control of production*—that is, the introduction of workers into the management of private enterprises.

The Anarchists objected that if this "control" were not to remain a dead letter, and if the workers' organizations were capable of exercising effective control, then they also were capable of guaranteeing all production. In such an event, private industry could be eliminated quickly, but progressively, and replaced by collective industry. Consequently, the Anarchists rejected the vague nebulous slogan of "control of production". They advocated *expropriation —progressive, but immediate——of private industry by the organizations of collective production.*

We want to emphasize, in that connection, that it is absolutely false—I insist on this, because the false assertion, sustained by ignorant people and by those of bad faith, has been fairly widespread—it is false, I say, that in the course of the Russian Revolution, the Anarchists knew only how to "destroy" and "criticize", "without being able to formulate the least positive ideas". And it is false that the Anarchists "did not themselves possess, and therefore never expressed sufficiently clear ideas on the application of their own conception". In looking through the libertarian press of the period [in Russia] (*Golos Truda, Anarchy, Nabat,* et cetera), one can see that this literature *abounded* in clear and practical expositions of the rôle and functioning of the workers' organizations,

as well as the method of action which would permit the latter, in co-operation with the peasants, to replace the destroyed capitalist and statist mechanism.

What the Anarchists lacked in the Russian Revolution was *not* clear and precise ideas, but, as we have said, *institutions* able, from the start, to apply those ideas to life. And it was the Bolsheviks who, to achieve their own plans, opposed the creation and the functioning of such institutions.

The [Anarchist] ideas, clear and exact, were formulated, the masses were intuitively ready to understand them and to apply them with the help of the revolutionaries, intellectuals, and specialists. The necessary institutions were sketched out and could have been rapidly oriented toward the true goal with the aid of the same elements. But the Bolsheviki deliberately prevented the spreading of those ideas and that enlightened assistance, and the activity of the [projected] institutions. *For they wanted action only for themselves and under the form of political power.*

This complex of facts, specific and incontestable, is basic for anyone who seeks to understand the development and meaning of the Russian Revolution. The reader will find in these pages numerous examples—chosen from among thousands—bearing out my statements, point by point.

We come now to the other controversial issue mentioned—the Constituent Assembly.

To continue the Revolution and transform it into a social revolution, the Anarchists saw no utility in calling such an assembly, an institution essentially political and bourgeois, cumbersome and sterile, an institution which, by its very nature, placed itself "above the social struggles" and concerned itself only, by means of dangerous compromises, with stopping the Revolution, and even suppressing it if possible.

So the Anarchists tried to make known to the masses the uselessness of the Constituent Assembly, and the necessity of going beyond it and replacing it at once with economic and social organizations, *if they really wanted to begin a social revolution.*

As seasoned politicians, the Bolsheviks hesitated to abandon the Constituent Assembly frankly. (Its convocation, as we have seen, occupied a prominent place on their programme before the

seizure of power). This hesitation had several reasons behind it: On the one hand, the Bolsheviki did not see any inconvenience in having the Revolution "stopped" at the stage where it was, provided they remained masters of power. The Assembly could serve their interests if, for example, its majority were Bolsheviks or if the Deputies approved their direction and their acts. On the other hand, the masses were closely attached to [the idea of] the Assembly, and it was not prudent to contradict them in the beginning. Finally, the Bolsheviks did not feel themselves strong enough to risk furnishing a trump card to their enemies, who, recalling the formal promises of the party before the seizure of power, could cry *Treason!* and disturb the masses.

For, since the latter were not thoroughly curbed and subjugated, their spirit was on guard, and their temper was very changeable; the example of the Kerensky government still fresh in memory. Finally, the party decided on this solution: to proceed with the calling of the Constituent Assembly, while supervising the elections minutely and exerting maximum effort to make sure that the results were favourable to the Bolsheviki régime.

If the Assembly was pro-Bolshevik, or at least docile and without real importance, it would be manœuvred and used for the ends of the government. If, however, the Assembly was not favourable to Bolshevism, the leaders of the party would observe closely the reactions of the masses, and dissolve the gathering on the first favourable occasion. To be sure, the game was somewhat risky. But counting on its vast and profound popularity, and also on the lack of power in the hands of the Assembly, which, moreover, was certain to compromise itself if it took a stand against Bolshevism, the risk was accepted. The events which followed demonstrated that the Bolshevik Party did not deceive itself.

Fundamentally, the promise of the Bolsheviks to call the Constituent Assembly as soon as they assumed power, was to them, only a demagogic formula. In their game, it was a card which might win everything at one toss. If the Assembly validated their power, their position would speedily and peculiarly be confirmed throughout the country and abroad. If the contrary should be the case, they felt that they had sufficient strength to be able to get rid of the Assembly without difficulty.

CHAPTER 4
Some Reflections

Naturally the popular masses could not recognize all the subtleties of these different interpretations. It was impossible for them —even when they had made some contact with our ideas—to understand the real significance of the differences in question. The Russian workers, of all the workers in the world, were the least familiar with political matters. They could not be aware either of the machiavellianism or the danger of the Bolshevik interpretation.

I recall the desperate efforts with which I tried to warn the city workers, in so far as it was possible, by word of mouth and by writing, of the imminent danger for the true Revolution in the event that the masses let the Bolshevik Party intrench itself solidly in power.

In vain I argued; the masses did not recognize the danger. How many times did they object in words like these: "Comrade, we understand you well. And moreover, we are not *too* confident. We agree that it is necessary for us to be somewhat on guard, not to believe blindly, and to maintain in ourselves a prudent distrust. But, up to the present, the Bolsheviks have never betrayed us. They march straightforwardly with us, they are our friends. And they claim that once they are in power they can easily make our aspirations triumph. That seems true to us. Then why should we reject them? Let us help them win power, and we will see afterward."

Unheeded, I pointed out that the goals of the Social Revolution could never be realized by means of political power. To doubting listeners I repeated that once organized and armed, the Bolshevik power, while admittedly as inevitably impotent as the others, would be infinitely more dangerous for the workers and more difficult to defeat than they had been. But invariably those

to whom I talked replied in this wise:

"Comrade, it was we, the masses, who overthrew Tsarism. It was we who overthrew the bourgeois government. And it is we who are ready to overthrow Kerensky. So, if you are right, and if the Bolsheviki have the misfortune of betraying us, and of not keeping their promises, we will overthrow them as we did the others. And then we will march finally and only with our friends the Anarchists."

Again in vain I pointed out that for various reasons, the Bolshevik State would be much more difficult to overthrow. But the workers would not, or could not, believe me.

All this, however, is not at all astonishing when in countries familiar with political methods and where (as in France) they are more or less disgusted with them, the labouring masses and even the intellectuals, while wishing for the Revolution, are still unable to understand that the installation in power of a political party, even of the extreme left, and the building of a State, whatever its label, will lead to the death of the Revolution. Could it be otherwise in a country such as Russia, which never had had the slightest political experience?

Returning on their battleships from Petrograd to Kronstadt after the victory of October, 1917, the revolutionary sailors soon began discussing the danger that might result simply from the existence of the Council of People's Commissars in power. Some maintained, notably, that this political *sanhedrin* was capable of some day betraying the principles of the October Revolution. But, on the whole, the sailors, primarily impressed by its easy victory, declared while brandishing their weapons: "In that case, since the cannons have known how to take the Winter Palace, they will know how to take Smolny also." (The former Smolny Institute in Petrograd was the first seat of the Bolshevik government, immediately after the victory.)

As we know, the political, statist, governmental idea had not yet been discredited in the Russia of 1917. And it still has not been discredited in any other country. Time and other historical experiences certainly are needed in order that the masses [everywhere], enlightened at the same time by propaganda, will finally be made entirely aware of the falsity, the vanity, the peril of the idea.

On the night of the famous day of October 25, I was on a street in Petrograd. It was dark and quiet. In the distance a few scattered rifle shots could be heard. Suddenly an armoured car passed me at full speed. From inside the car, a hand threw a packet of leaflets which flew in all directions. I bent down and picked one up. It was an announcement by the new government to "workers and peasants" telling of the fall of the Kerensky government, and giving a list of the "People's Commissars" of the new régime, Lenin at the head.

A complex sentiment of sadness, rage, and disgust, but also a sort of ironic satisfaction, took hold of me. "Those imbeciles (if they are not simply demagogic imposters, I thought) must imagine that thus they have achieved the Social Revolution! Oh, well, they are going to see . . . And the masses are going to learn a good lesson!"

Who could have foreseen at that moment that only three years and four months later, in 1921, on the glorious days of February 25 to 28, the workers of Petrograd would revolt against the new "Communist" government?

There exists an opinion which has some support among Anarchists. It is maintained that, under the prevailing conditions [in October, 1917], the Russian Anarchists, momentarily renouncing their negation of politics, parties, demagogy, and power, should have acted "like Bolsheviks", that is to say, should have formed a sort of political party and endeavoured to take power *provisionally*. In that event, it is asserted, they could have "carried the masses" with them, defeated the Bolsheviki, and seized power "to organize Anarchism subsequently".

I consider this reasoning fundamentally and dangerously false.

Even if the Anarchists, in such a contingency, had won the victory (which is exceedingly doubtful), that winning, bought at the price of the "momentary" abandonment of the basic principle of Anarchism, never could have led to the triumph of that principle. Carried away by the force and logic of events, the Anarchists in power—what nonsense!—could only have achieved *a variety of Bolshevism.*

(I believe that the recent events in Spain and the position of

certain Spanish Anarchists who accepted posts in the government, thus throwing themselves into the void of "politics" and reducing to nothing the real Anarchist action, confirms, to a large extent, my point of view.)

If such a method could have achieved the result sought, if it were possible to fight power with power, Anarchism would have no reason to exist. "In principle" everybody is an "Anarchist". If the Communists, the Socialists, *et al.*, are not so in reality, it is precisely because they believe it possible to arrive at a libertarian order by way of politics and power. (I speak of sincere people). Therefore, if one wants to suppress power by means of power and the "carried away masses" one is a Communist, a Socialist, or anything you like, but one is not an Anarchist. One is an Anarchist, specifically, because one holds it impossible to suppress power, authority, and the State with the aid of power, authority, and the State (and the "carried away masses"). Whenever one has recourse to such means—even if only "momentarily" and with very good intentions—one ceases to be an Anarchist, one renounces Anarchism, one rallies to the Bolshevik principle.

The idea of seeking to carry the masses along with power is contrary to Anarchism, which does not believe that man can ever achieve his true emancipation by that method.

I recall, in this connection, a conversation with our widely known comrade, Maria Spiridonova, animator of the left Social Revolutionary Party, in 1919 or 1920 in Moscow. (At the risk of her own life, she assassinated, in the old days, one of the most ferocious satraps of the Tsar. She endured tortures, barely missed death [by hanging], and remained imprisoned a long time. Freed by the Revolution of February, 1917, she joined the left Social Revolutionaries and became one of their pillars. She was one of the most sincere revolutionists, devoted, respected, esteemed.)

During our discussion. Maria Spiridonova told me that the left Social Revolutionaries believed in power in a very restricted form; a power reduced to a minimum, accordingly very weak, very humane, and especially very provisional. "Just the bare minimum, permitting it, as quickly as possible, to weaken, to crumble, and to disappear!"

"Don't fool yourself," I advised her. "Power is never a ball of sand, which, when it is rolled, disintegrates. It is, on the con-

trary, a snowball, which, when rolled, increases in size. Once ir power, you would do like the others."

And so would the Anarchists, I might add.

In the same connection, I remember another striking incident.

In 1919 I was active in the Ukraine. By that time the Russian masses already were keenly disillusioned about Bolshevism. The Anarchist propaganda in Ukrainia (where the Bolsheviks had not yet totally suppressed it) had begun to achieve a lively success.

One night some Red soldiers, delegated by their regiments, came to the seat of our Kharkov group and told us this: "Several units of the garrison here are fed up with the Bolsheviks. They sympathize with the Anarchists, and are ready to act. One of these nights they could easily arrest the members of the Bolshevik government of the Ukraine and proclaim an Anarchist government, which certainly would be better. Nobody would oppose it. Everybody has had enough of the Bolshevik power. Therefore we ask the Anarchist Party to come to an agreement with us, to authorize us to act in its name in preparing this action, to proceed to arrest the present government, and to take power in its place, with our help. We put ourselves completely at the disposition of the Anarchist Party."

Of course the misunderstanding was evident. The term "Anarchist Party" alone bore witness to it. These good soldiers had no idea of what Anarchism really meant. They may have heard it spoken of vaguely or attended some meeting.

But the fact was there. Two alternative solutions were available to us: either to take advantage of this misunderstanding, have the Bolshevik government arrested, and "take power" in the Ukraine; or explain to the soldiers their mistake, give them an understanding of the fundamental nature of Anarchism, and renounce the adventure.

Naturally we chose the second solution. And for two hours I set forth our viewpoint to the regimental delegates.

"If," I said to them, "the vast masses of Russia arise in a new revolution, frankly abandoning the Government and conscious that they need not replace it with another to organize their life on a new basis, that would be the proper, the true Revolution, and all the Anarchists would march with the masses. But if we—a group of men—arrest the Bolshevik government to put ourselves

in their place, nothing basic is changed. And subsequently, carried along by the very same system, we could not do any better than the Bolsheviki."

Finally the soldiers understood my explanations, and left swearing to work henceforth for the true Revolution and the Anarchist idea.

What is inconceivable is that there exist in our day "Anarchists"—and not a few of them—who still reproach me because we did not "take power" at that time. According to them, we should have gone ahead and arrested the Bolshevik government and installed ourselves in their place. They maintain that we lost a good opportunity to realize our ideas—with the help of power. But that would have been contrary to our principles.

How many times have I said to an audience, in the midst of the Revolution: "Never forget that no one can do anything *for* you, in *your* place, *above* you. The 'best' government can only become bankrupt. And if someday you learn that I, Voline, tempted by politics and authoritarianism, have accepted a governmental post, have become a 'commissar', a 'minister', or something similar, two weeks later, comrades, you may shoot me with an easy conscience, knowing that I have betrayed the truth, the true cause, and the true Revolution."

PART III

AFTER OCTOBER

CHAPTER 1

The Bolsheviks in Power; Differences Between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists

Struggle between the two concepts of the Social-Revolution—the statist-centralist and the libertarian-federalist ideas—was unequal in the Russia of 1917. The statist conception won, and the Bolshevik government took over the vacant throne. Lenin was its undisputed leader. And to him and his party fell the task of liquidating the war, facing up to all the problems of the Revolution, and leading it onto the course of the real Social Revolution.

Having the upper hand, the political idea was going to prove itself. We shall see how it did this.

The new Bolshevik regime was in fact a government of intellectuals, of Marxist doctrinaires. Installed in power, claiming to represent the workers, and to be the only group that knew the correct way to lead them to Socialism, they expected to govern, above all, by decrees and laws which the labouring masses would be obliged to sanction and apply.

In the beginning that regime and its chief, Lenin, gave the appearance of being the faithful servants of the will of the working people; and of justifying, in any case, their decisions, pronouncements, and activities before the workers. Thus, for example, all the Bolsheviki's initial measures, notably the decree remitting the land to the peasants (October 26) and the first official step toward immediate peace (decree of October 28) were adopted by the Congress of Soviets, which gave the Government its approval. Moreover, Lenin knew in advance that these laws would be received with satisfaction by both the people and the revolutionary circles. Fundamentally, they did nothing but sanction the existing state of affairs.

The same Lenin considered it necessary to justify before the executive committee of the Soviets the dissolution of the

Constituent Assembly, which occurred in January, 1918. This action of the October Revolution deserves to be described in detail.

As the reader already knows, the Anarchists, in keeping with their whole social and revolutionary conception, were opposed to the convocation of the Assembly. Here are the terms in which they developed their point of view on that issue in *Golos Truda,* [official organ of the Union for Anarchist Propaganda in Petrograd], No. 19, November 18/December 1, 1917:

Comrade workers, peasants, soldiers, sailors, and all toilers:

We are in the midst of the election for the Constituent Assembly. It is very probable that this will soon meet and begin to sit.

All the political parties—including the Bolsheviks—put the ultimate fate of the Revolution in the hands of this central organization.

In this situation we have the duty to put you on guard against two eventual dangers:

First danger: The Bolsheviki *will not have a strong majority* in the Constituent Assembly (or may even be in a minority).

In that case, the Assembly will comprise a useless, motley, socialo-bourgeois political institution. It will be an absurd talking shop like the "State Conference" in Moscow, the "Democratic Conference" in Petrograd, the "Provisional Council of the Republic," et cetera. It will become involved in empty discussions and disputes. It will hold back the real revolution.

If we do not want to *exaggerate* this danger, it is only because we hope that in this case the masses will once again know how to save the Revolution, with weapons in hand, and will push it forward on the right road.

But in relation to this danger we should point out that the masses have no need of a hullabaloo of this type, and ought to get rid of it. Why waste energy and money to create and maintain an inept institution? (While waiting, the workers' Revolution will stop once again!) What would be the good of sacrificing more strength and blood only to combat later "this stupid and sterile institution" in order to "save the Revolution" (how many times again?) and get it out of "a dead end"? That strength and those efforts could be employed to the greater advantage of the Revolution, the people, and the whole country at large, *in organizing the labouring masses in a direct way and from the very bottom,* alike in the villages, the cities, and in the various enterprises, uniting the [resultant] organizations from below, into communes and federations of free villages and cities, in a direct and natural manner. All that would need to be done on the basis of work and not of politics nor

of membership in this or that party—and this would lead later to regional unification. Likewise that strength and those efforts could and should be employed in organizing immediately and energetically the supplying of enterprises with raw materials and fuel, in improving means of communication, in organizing exchange and the entire new economy in general, and, finally, in carrying on a direct fight against the remains of reaction, especially against the gravely threatening movement of Kaledin in the central region.

Second danger: The Bolsheviki *will have a strong majority* in the Constituent Assembly.

In such an event, having easily succeeded in overcoming the "opposition" and wiping it out without difficulty, they will become, in a firm and solid manner, the legal masters of the country and of the whole situation—and masters manifestly recognized by "the majority of the population." That is precisely what the Bolsheviks want to obtain from the Constituent Assembly. That is what they need—that the Assembly consolidate and "legalize" their power.

Comrades, *this danger is much more important, much more serious than the first.* Be on your guard!

Once their power is consolidated and "legalized," the Bolsheviks—who are Social Democrats, that is, men of centralist and authoritarian action—will begin to re-arrange the life of the country and of the people by governmental and dictatorial methods, imposed by the centre. Their seat in Petrograd will dictate the will of the party to all Russia, and command the whole nation. *Your Soviets and your other local organizations will become, little by little, simply executive organs of the will of the central government.* In place of healthy, constructive work by the labouring masses, in place of free unification from the bottom, we will see the installation of an authoritarian and statist apparatus which would act from above and set about wiping out everything that stood in its way with an iron hand. The Soviets and other organizations will have to obey and do its will. That will be called "discipline." Too bad for those who are not in agreement with the central power and who do not consider it correct to obey it! Strong by reason of the "general approbation" of the populace, that power will force them to submit.

Be on guard, comrades!

Watch carefully and remember.

The more the success of the Bolsheviks becomes established, and the firmer their situation, the more their action will take on an authoritarian aspect, and the more clear-cut will be their consolidation and defense of their political power. They will begin to give more and more categorical orders to the Soviets and other local organizations. They will put into effect from above their own policies without hesitating to use armed force in case of resistance.

The more their success is upheld, the more that danger will exist, for the actions of the Bolsheviks will become all the more secure and certain. Each new success will turn their heads further. Every additional

day of achievement by Lenin's party will mean increasing peril to the Revolution.

Furthermore, you can already see this now.

Study carefully the latest orders and plans of the new authority. You can already now clearly see the tendency of the Bolshevik leaders to arrange the lives of the people in a political and authoritarian manner, by means of a center which imposes itself on them. You can already see them give formal orders to the country. You can already see that those leaders understand the slogan "Power to the Soviets" to mean power for the central authority in Petrograd, an authority to which the soviets and other local organizations must be subjugated as simple executive organs.

This is happening *now,* when the Bolshevik leaders still feel strongly dependent on the masses and are obviously afraid of provoking disillusionment; it is happening now, when their success is not yet totally guaranteed and still depends completely on the attitude of the masses toward them.

What will happen when their success becomes a fait accompli and the masses accept them with enthusiastic and firm confidence?

Comrade workers, peasants and soldiers!

Don't ever lose sight of this danger!

Be ready to defend the real Revolution and the real freedom of your organizations and your action, wherever you are, against the violence and the yoke of the new Authority, the new Master: the centralized State and the new imposters: the heads of the political parties.

Be ready to act in such a way as to turn the success of the Bolsheviks—if these successes transform them to imposters—into their graves.

Be ready to resuce the Revolution from a new prison.

Don't forget that *only you* may and can construct and create your new life by means of your free local organizations and their federations. If not, you will never see it. The Bolsheviks often tell you the same thing. All the better, naturally, if in the final analysis, they act according to what they say.

But comrades, all new masters, whose position depends on the sympathy and the confidence of the masses, speak sweetly in the beginning. In the first days, Kerensky also had a honeyed voice; the heart of gall is revealed later.

Observe and take note, not of *words* and *speeches* but of *gestures* and *acts.* And as soon as you discover the slightest contradiction between what these people *tell* you and what they do, be on guard!

Don't trust in words, comrades. Trust only in deeds!

Don't trust the Constituent Assembly, the parties, or the leaders. Have confidence only in yourselves and in the Revolution. Only yourselves—that is, your local grass-root organizations, organizations of the workers and not of the parties, and then your direct and natural unification (along regional lines)—only *you* can be the builders and the masters of the new life, and not the Constituent Assembly, not a central government, not the parties nor the leaders!

And in an editorial headed "Instead of a Constituent Assembly," in the following issue of *Golos Truda* (No. 21, December 2/15, 1917), the anarchists said:

It is well known that we Anarchists repudiate the Constituent Assembly, considering it not only useless, but frankly harmful to the cause of the Revolution. However, only a few are yet aware of the *reasons* for our point of view. And what is essential is not the fact that we oppose the Assembly, but the ***reasons*** which lead us to do so. But it is not through caprice, obstinacy, or the spirit of contradiction that we reject that Assembly.

Moreover, we do not confine ourselves to "purely and simply" rejecting it; we arrive at that rejection in a perfectly logical way. We believe, in fact, that in a time of social revolution, what is important for the workers is for them to organize their new life themselves, from the bottom, and with the help of their immediate economic organizations, and not from above, by means of an authoritarian political centre.

We reject the Constituent Assembly, and we offer in its place an entirely different "constituent" institution—*an organization of labour* unified from below in a natural manner. We spurn the Assembly because we propose something else. And we don't want this other thing to be threatened by the Constituent Assembly.

While the Bolsheviks recognize, on the one hand, the direct class organization of the workers (in Soviets, etc.) on the other hand they preserve the Constituent Assembly, that inept and useless organization. We consider this duality contradictory, harmful, and exceedingly dangerous. It is the inevitable result of the fact that the Bolsheviks, as true Social Democrats, are generally mixed up in questions of "politics" and "economics," "authority" and "non-authority," "party" and "class." They dare not renounce the dead prejudices definitively and completely, for that would be like throwing themselves into water without knowing how to swim.

To get involved in contradictions is inevitable for people who, during a proletarian revolution, consider their principal task to be *the organizing of power.* To oppose this "organization of power" we would substitute for it *"the organization of the Revolution."*

"The organization of power" leads logically to the Constituent Assembly. "The organization of the Revolution" leads, also logically, to another building, where there simply would be no room for that Assembly, and where it would be strictly in the way. That is why we oppose the Constituent Assembly.

The Bolsheviks preferred to convoke the Assembly, having decided in advance to dominate it or dissolve it if its majority was not Bolshevist—a possibility under the circumstances of the moment.

So that assemblage was called together on January 18, 1918. Despite all the efforts of the Bolshevik Party, in power for three months, the majority of the Constituent Assembly turned out to be anti-Bolshevik. This development fully confirmed the expectations of the Anarchists. "If the workers," they said, "tranquilly pursue their work of economic and social construction, without paying attention to political comedies, the great majority of the people will finally follow them, without any ceremony. And meanwhile they have on their backs this unnecessary worry."

Nevertheless, and despite the utter uselessness of this Assembly, the "work" of which was pursued in an atmosphere of dismal and general indifference (everyone felt, in fact, the weakness and futility of that institution), the Bolshevik government hesitated to end its existence.

It required the almost fortuitous intervention of an Anarchist finally to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. That is another little known historical fact.

Fate decided that an Anarchist sailor from Kronstadt, by name Anatol Jelezniakov, be appointed by the Bolshevik regime as commander of the detachment of guards in the Tauride Palace, where the 707 delegates to the Assembly met.[1]

Throughout a long night the leaders of the various political parties made interminable speeches, which fatigued and exasperated the guard corps that was on duty. Hours of debate resulted in rejection of the Bolshevik platform by the

[1] As in many other circumstances, the Bolsheviks tried, for a long time, to distort the facts concerning Jelezniakov. They claimed, in their press, that he had become—or that he always had been—a Bolshevik. It is understandable that the contrary troubled them.

At the time of Jelezniakov's death (he was mortally wounded in a battle with the "Whites" in central Russia) the Bolsheviks asserted, in a note that appeared in *Izvestia,* that on his death bed, he declared that he was in agreement with Bolshevism. Since then they have said squarely that he was always a Bolshevik.

All this, however, is false. *The author of these lines* and other comrades *knew Jelezniakov intimately.* When he left Petrograd for the front, taking leave of me, and knowing that as an Anarchist he could expect *anything* from the Bolsheviki, he said to me, word for word. "Whatever may happen to me, and whatever they may say of me, know well that I am an Anarchist, that I fight as one, and that *whatever my fate, I will die an Anarchist.*"

And he entrusted to me the duty of demolishing, if need be, the lies of the Bolsheviks. I am here performing that duty.

Assembly majority. Then the Bolsheviki and the left Social Revolutionaries left the session after a threatening declaration to the representatives of the right. But other speeches followed on various issues, and kept going until dawn. Finally Jelezniakov, at the head of his detachment, entered the hall of deliberations and marched up to the rostrum. Addressing the chairman—Victor Tchernov, leader of the right Social Revolutionary Party, the head of the guards said: "Close the session, please, my men are tired!"

Rankled and indignant, the chairman protested.

"I tell you that the guard corps is tired," Jelezniakov insisted, threateningly. "I ask you all to leave the Assembly Hall. And furthermore, *there has been enough of this babbling! You have prattled long enough! Get out!"*

The assemblage obeyed.

That morning, with knowledge that the delegates were scheduled to reconvene at noon, the Bolshevik government took advantage of the incident. It sent troops to occupy the meeting hall of the Constituent Assembly in the Tauride Palace, the soldiers being armed with rifles, machine-guns and two field pieces. And before the day ended, it issued a decree declaring the Assembly dissolved.

The nation remained indifferent.

Later the Lenin regime justified this act before the executive committee of the Soviets.

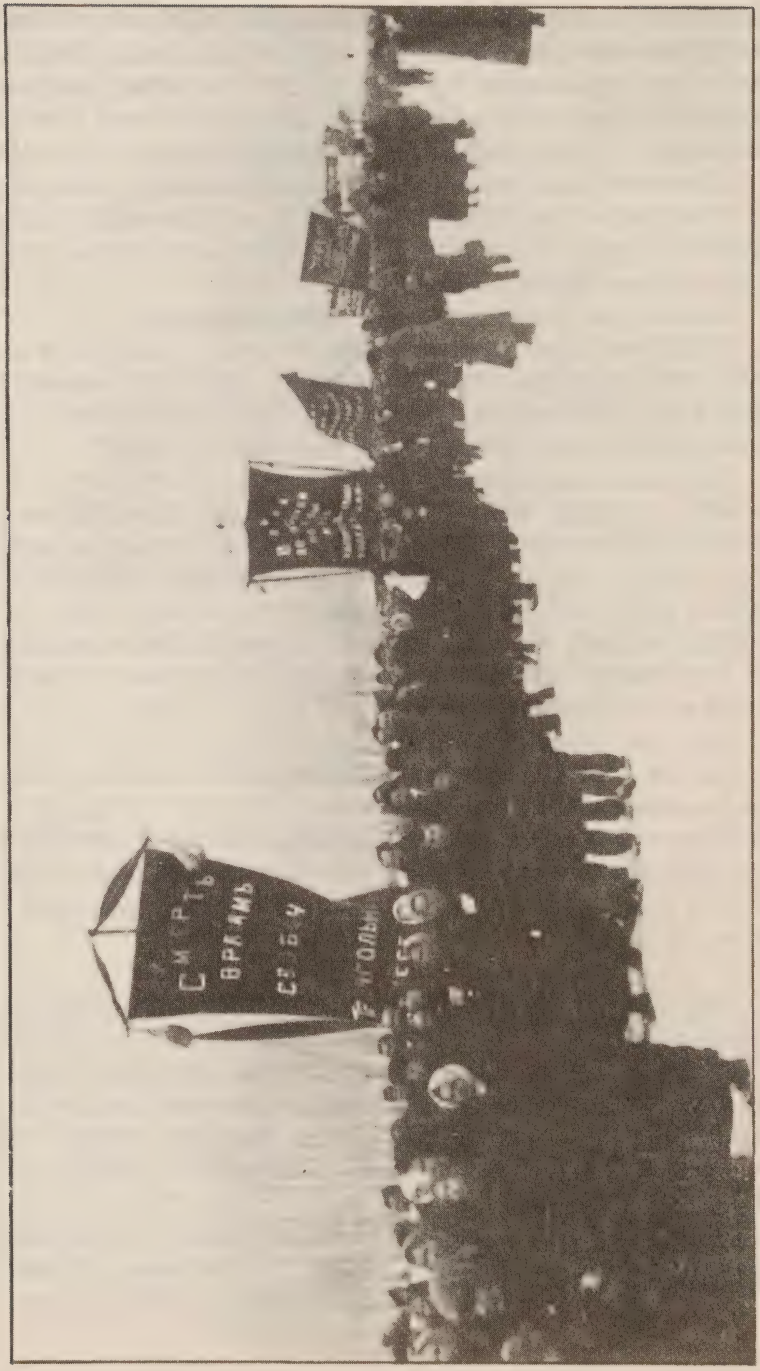
Thus everything had gone smoothly for the Bolsheviki—*until that day when the will of the Government entered, for the first time, into conflict with the will of the "governed," the people.*

Then everything changed, in the face of a new German offensive.

After the October Revolution, the German Army which was operating along the Russian border remained inactive for some time. Its command hesitating, awaiting events, and maneuvering with a view to gaining the greatest possible advantage from the situation.

In February, 1918, feeling themselves ready, the Germans decided to start an offensive against Revolutionary Russia.

And now it became necessary for the Bolshevik Govern-



Peace demonstration in Petrograd. December 17, 1917.

ment to take a position. Any resistance was impossible, for the Russian Army would not fight. It was essential to find a solution of the situation. Such a solution would resolve, at the same time, the first problem of the Revolution—that of the war.

There were two possible solutions:

1. Abandon the front. Let the German Army venture into the vast territory in revolt, draw it into the depths of the country, in order to isolate it, separate it from its supply bases, make guerilla warfare against it, demoralize it, and disintegrate it, thus defending the Social Revolution—a solution which had been successfully utilized in 1812, and which was always possible in a land as huge as Russia.

2. Enter into negotiations with the German command. Propose peace to them, negotiate further, and accept it whatever the conditions.

The first of those two alternatives was that of nearly all the workers' organizations consulted, as well as that of the left Social Revolutionaries, the Maximalists, and the Anarchists. They were of the opinion that only that way of acting was worthy of a social revolution; that it alone made it conceivable to hope, as a consequence, for the breaking out of revolution in Germany and elsewhere. In short, they felt that this course—really impressive direct action—would constitute, *under existing conditions and in a country like Russia,* the only correct method of defending the Revolution.

Golos Truda, in an editorial[1] entitled *The Revolutionary Spirit,* indicated the gravity of the problem as the German onslaught was pressed. It said:

> Here we are at a decisive turn of the Revolution. It is a crisis which may be fatal. The hour which has struck is impressively clear and exceptionally tragic. The situation is finally plain. The question is in the process of being settled. In a few hours we will know whether or not the Government has signed the peace with Germany. *The whole future of the Russian Revolution and the course of world events depend on this day, on this minute.*

[1] No. 27, February 24, 1918.

The conditions proposed by Germany are plain and without reservations.

The ideas of several eminent members of the political parties, and those of the members of the government, are already known. But there is no unity of opinion anywhere. There is disagreement among the Bolsheviks. There is disagreement among the left Socialist Revolutionaries. There is disagreement in the Council of People's Commissars, in the Petrograd Soviet and in its Executive. There is disagreement among the masses, in the workshops, in the factories, in the barracks. And the opinion of the provinces is not yet known.

(As we mentioned earlier: the opinion of the left Socialist Revolutionaries, as well as the opinion of the working masses in Petrograd and in the provinces, subsequently turned out to be hostile to the signing of the peace treaty with the German generals.)

The time limit of the German ultimatum is 48 hours. Under these conditions, whether one wants it or not, the question will be discussed, and the decision will be made in haste, and strictly in Government circles. And that is what is most terrible . . .

As for our own opinion, our readers know it. From the beginning, we have been against the "peace negotiations." Today we are opposed to signing the treaty. *We are for immediate and intensive organization of partisan resistance.* We consider that the Government's telegram asking for peace should be revoked: the challenge should be accepted and the fate of the Revolution be put directly, frankly, in the hands of the proletarians of the whole world.

Lenin insists on signing the peace. And if our information is correct, a large majority will end by following him. The treaty will be signed.

Only the deep conviction of the ultimate invincibility of this revolution permits us not to take this eventuality too tragically. But this way of concluding peace would strike *a major blow at the Revolution, weakening it, debasing it, distorting it* for a long time, we are absolutely convinced.

We know Lenin's argument, especially from his article *On Revolutionary Phrases.*[1] But those arguments do not convince us.

[1] In *Pravda,* No. 31.

Golos Truda then made a detailed criticism of Lenin's position, and offered an argument in opposition. It insisted that acceptance of the peace offered would slacken the Revolution, and render it for a long time feeble, anaemic, colourless. Acceptance of such a peace, it held, would warp the Revolution, bring it to its knees, clip its wings, make it crawl. "For," the periodical concluded, "*the revolutionary spirit, the great enthusiasm for the struggle, the magnificent flight of the glorious idea of the deliverance of the world, will be taken from it.* And as for the world—its light will be extinguished."

The majority of the Bolshevik Party's central committee at the beginning pronounced itself in favour of the first solution. But Lenin was afraid of this bold decision. Like [any] dictator, he had no confidence in the action of the masses if they were not led by the chiefs and politicians by means of formal orders and behind-the-scenes machinations. He invoked the danger of death for the Revolution if the peace offered by the Germans was rejected. And he proclaimed the necessity of a "respite" which would permit the creation of a regular army.

For the first time since the advent of the Revolution, Lenin had to brave the opinion of the masses and even that of his own comrades. He threatened the latter, and declined all responsibility for what might happen. He declared that he would retire from the scene if his will was not carried out. His comrades, in turn, were afraid of losing "the great leader of the Revolution". They yielded. The opinion of the masses was deliberately trampled on. A peace was signed [on March 3, 1918]. [1]

Thus, for the first time, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" won over the proletariat. *For the first time, the Bolshevik power*

[1] That treaty took from Russia "territories equal in size to approximately eighteen provinces".

succeeded in terrorizing the masses, in substituting its will for theirs, in acting on its own, in disregarding the opinion of others.

The peace of Brest-Litovsk was *imposed* on the working people by the Bolshevist government. The people wanted to end the war in an entirely different way. But the Government took charge of arranging everything. It precipitated matters, forced events, and this broke the resistance of the masses. It managed to keep them quiet, to obtain their obedience, *and their forced passivity.*

Incidentally, I remember meeting, in those feverish hours, the well-known Bolshevik, Nikolai Bukharin, later executed in the course of the infamous Moscow purge trials. I had previously made his acquaintance in New York, but until then we had never seen each other in Russia. Hastening through a corridor in the Smolny Institute building in Petrograd [seat of the Bolshevik government at this time] I observed Bukharin arguing and gesticulating in a corner amid a group of Bolsheviki. He recognized me and signalled. I went over.

Without preliminaries, and filled with emotion, he began complaining about Lenin's attitude on the question of peace. He lamented that he was in complete disagreement with Lenin, and emphasized the fact that, on this point, he was wholly in agreement with the left Social Revolutionaries, the Anarchists, and the masses in general. And he declared, with consternation, that Lenin would listen to nothing, that Lenin didn't "give a damn for the opinions of others", and that he sought to impose his will and his own mistake on everybody and terrorized the party by threatening to relinquish power. According to Bukharin, Lenin's mistake was fatal for the Revolution. And that frightened him.

"But," I said to him, "if you're in disagreement with Lenin, you have only to say so and insist on it. All the more since you are not alone in this. And moreover, even if you were alone, you have, I suppose, the same right as Lenin to have an opinion, to express it, spread it, and defend it."

"Oh," he cut in, "you don't mean it. Think what that would mean. To fight with Lenin? That would lead automatically to my expulsion from the party. That would mean a revolt against all our past, against our discipline, against the comrades in arms. I would feel myself under obligation to provoke a split in the party,

to pull out the other dissidents with me, and to create another party to struggle with Lenin's. You see, old man, you know me well enough: am I of sufficient stature to become a leader of a party and to declare war on Lenin and the Bolshevik Party? No, don't let us deceive ourselves! I don't have the makings of a leader. And even if I had—No, no, I couldn't, I couldn't do that."

He was greatly excited, put his head in his hands, and almost wept.

Being in a hurry, and feeling that prolonging the discussion would be useless, I abandoned him to his despair. As we know, he later rallied to Lenin's thesis—though perhaps only in appearance.

Such was the first serious difference between the new government and the people it governed. It was resolved to the advantage of the power which imposed itself. This was the first imposture. And it was only the first—but the most difficult. From now on, things could go "by themselves". Having once encroached upon the will of the labouring masses with impunity, having once taken the initiative in action, the new power was, so to speak, a lasso around the Revolution. Later it would only have to tighten the noose, to force and finally habituate the masses to follow in its wake, to make them leave in its hands *all* initiative, submit completely to its authority, and reduce the whole Revolution to the proportions of a dictatorship.

That, in fact, is what happened. For, *such, inevitably, is the attitude of all governments. Such, inevitably, is the course of all revolutions which leave intact the statist, centralist, political, governmental principle.*

This course is a slope. And once [any group is] on that slope, the sliding occurs by itself. Nothing can stop it. At first neither the governing clique nor the governed perceive what is happening. The former (in so far as they are sincere) believe that they are fulfilling their rôle and carrying out an indispensable salutary work. The latter, fascinated, tightly gripped, and dominated, follow.

And when, finally, these two groups, and especially the latter, begin to understand their error, it is too late. It is impossible to go back, impossible even to modify anything. One is too deeply

involved with the fatal slope [the downward momentum is too great]. And even if the governed cry out and take a stand against the governing clique to make them climb back up this menacing slope, it is too late!

CHAPTER 2
The Fatal Descent

TO SEE what has since become of the Russian Revolution, to understand the real rôle of Bolshevism, and discern the reasons which—again in human history—transformed a magnificent and victorious popular revolt into a lamentable failure, *it is necessary,* clearly and ahead of anything else, *to comprehend fully two truths,* which, unfortunately, are still not yet widely enough known, and the misunderstanding of which deprives the majority of those interested of a true comprehension.

Here is the first truth:

There is an explicit and irreconcilable contradiction, an opposition between the true Revolution, which, on the one hand, tends to expand—*and could expand in an unlimited way* to conquer *definitively*—and on the other hand, the theory and practice of authoritarianism and statism. There is an explicit, irreconcilable contradiction, a struggle between the very essence of State Socialist power (if it triumphs) and that of the true Social Revolutionary process. The very substance of the real Social Revolution is the recognition and achievement of a vast and free creative movement of the labouring masses freed from all servile work. It is the affirmation and expansion of an immense process of construction based on emancipated labour, on natural co-ordination and fundamental equality.

At bottom, the true Social Revolution is the beginning of true human evolution, that is to say, a free creative ascension of the human masses, based on the vast and frank initiative of millions of men in all branches of activity. This essence of the Revolution is instinctively felt by the revolutionary people. It is more or less precisely understood and formulated by the Anarchists.

What results "automatically" from this definition of the Social Revolution (a definition which cannot be refuted) is *not* the idea

of *an authoritarian direction* (dictatorial or other) of the masses—an idea belonging entirely to the old bourgeois, capitalist, exploiting world—*but that of a collaboration* to bring forward their evolution. And from it also flows the necessity of an absolutely free circulation of all revolutionary ideas and finally the need for undisguised truth, for free and general seeking of it, experimenting with it, and putting it into practice as an essential condition of a fertile action of the masses and of the complete triumph of the Revolution.

But the basis of State Socialism and delegated power is *the explicit non-recognition of these principles of the Social Revolution.* The characteristic traits of Socialist ideology and practice (authority, power, State, dictatorship) do not belong to the future, but are wholly a part of the bourgeois past. The "statist" conception of the Revolution, the idea of a limit, of a "termination" of the revolutionary process, the tendency to dam it, to "petrify" this process, and especially (instead of allowing the labouring masses all the possibilities for an adequate and autonomous movement and action) to concentrate once more in the hands of the State and of a handful of new masters all future evolution—all that rests on old traditions of a circumscribed routine, on a worn-out model, which has nothing in common with the real Revolution.

Once this model has been applied, the true principles of the Revolution are fatally abandoned. Then follows, inevitably, the rebirth, under another name, of the exploitation of the labouring masses, with all its consequences.

Therefore, beyond doubt, the forward march of the revolutionary masses toward real emancipation, toward the creation of new forms of social life, is incompatible with the very principle of State power. And it is clear that the authoritarian principle and the revolutionary principle are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive—and that the revolutionary principle is essentially turned toward the future, while the other is tied by all its roots to the past, and thus is reactionary.

The authoritarian Socialist revolution and the [true] Social Revolution follow two opposite procedures. Consequently, one must conquer and the other perish. Either the true Revolution with its vast free and creative flood, breaking definitely with the roots of the past, triumphs on the ruins of the authoritarian

principle, or it is the authoritarian principle which wins, and then the roots of the past "strangle" the real Revolution, which no longer can be achieved.

Socialist power and the Social Revolution are contradictory elements. It is impossible to reconcile them, still less to unite them; the triumph of the one means the endangering of the other with all the logical consequences, in either case. A revolution inspired by State Socialism and which entrusts its fate to it, even if only provisionally or transitionally, is lost. It is started on a false course, on an increasingly steep slope, which leads straight to the abyss.

Here is the second truth—or rather a logical ensemble of truths—which completes the first and makes it more specific:

1. *All political power inevitably creates a privileged situation* for the men who exercise it. Thus it violates, from the beginning, the equalitarian principle and strikes at the heart of the Social Revolution—which is largely inspired by that principle.

2. All political power inevitably becomes a source of other privileges, even if it does not depend on the bourgeoisie. Having taken over the Revolution, having mastered it, and bridled it, *power is compelled to create a bureaucratic and coercive apparatus,* indispensable to all authority which wants to maintain itself, to command, to order—in a word, to "govern". Rapidly it attracts and groups around itself all sorts of elements eager to dominate and exploit.

Thus it forms a new privileged caste, at first politically and later economically: directors, functionaries, soldiers, policemen, et cetera—individuals dependent on it, and accordingly ready to support it and defend it against all others, without caring in the least about "principles" or "justice". It sows everywhere the seed of inequality and soon infects the whole social organism, which, being more and more passive to the extent that it feels the impossibility of fighting the infection, becomes itself favourable to the return to bourgeois principles in a new guise.

3. *All power* seeks more or less to take in its hands the reins of social life. It *predisposes the masses to passivity,* and all spirit of initiative is stifled by the very existence of power, in the extent to which it is exercised.

The "Communist" power, which, in principle, has concentrated everything in its own hands, is, in this connection, a veritable trap. Puffed up with its own "authority" and filled with its pretended "responsibility" (with which, at bottom, it endowed itself), it is afraid of all independent action. All autonomous initiative immediately appears suspect [in its eyes] and threatens it; so it tries to diminish and thwart any such action. For it wants to hold the tiller and to hold it alone. Initiative by anyone else seems to it to be an invasion of its territory and its prerogatives. Such [independent motion] is insupportable to that power. And it is disregarded, rejected, and stamped out, or carefully supervised and controlled, with a "logic" and persistence that is abominable and pitiless.

The tremendous new creative forces which are latent in the masses thus remain unused. This applies as much to the field of action as to that of thought. With respect to the latter, the "Communist" power has distinguished itself everywhere by absolute intolerance, which can be compared only to that of the Holy Inquisition. For, on another plane, this power also has considered itself to be the only bearer of truth and safety, neither accepting nor tolerating any contradiction, or any way of conceiving or thinking other than its own.

4. No political power is capable of solving effectively the gigantic constructive problems of the Revolution. The "Communist" power which took over this enormous task and pretended to accomplish it, demonstrated itself, in this respect, to be particularly inept. In fact, its pretensions consisted of wanting, and being in a position, to "direct" the whole titanic activity, infinitely varied, of millions of human beings. To do this successfully, it would have had to be able to embrace at all times the incommensurable and moving immensity of life: to have been able to know everything, supervise everything, arrange everything, organize everything, lead everything. It is a question of an incalculable number of needs, interests, activities, situations, combinations, and transformations—and therefore of problems of all kinds, in continual motion.

Soon, not knowing any more where to give leeway, the power ended by no longer embracing anything, arranging anything, or "directing" anything at all. And, in the first place, it showed itself

absolutely powerless to organize effectively the disoriented economic life of Russia. This quickly disintegrated. Completely dislocated, it floundered, in a disorderly way, between the ruins of the fallen régime and the powerlessness of the newly proclaimed system.

Under these circumstances, the incompetence of the ["Communist"] power [in Russia] led, in a short time, to an economic collapse. This meant the stopping of industrial activity, the ruin of agriculture, the destruction of all connections between the various branches of the [national] economy, and the destruction of all economic and social equilibrium.

Inevitably, this resulted, in the beginning, in a policy of constraint—especially in relation to the peasants. They were forced, in spite of everything, to feed the cities. But that procedure proved ineffective, because the peasants had recourse to passive resistance, and poverty became the mistress of the whole country. Work, production, transport, and exchange were disorganized and fell into a chaotic state.

5. To maintain the economic life of the country at an endurable level, power has, in the last analysis, only constraint, violence, and terror as its agents. It resorts to these more and more widely and methodically. But the country continues to flounder in frightful poverty, to the point of famine.

The flagrant impotence of power to establish a healthy economic life, the manifest sterility of the Revolution, the physical and moral suffering created by this situation for millions of individuals, a violence which increased every day in despotism and intensity—such are essential factors which soon fatigue and disgust the population, making it antagonistic to the Revolution, and *thus favouring the recrudescence of anti-revolutionary spirit and movements.* This situation incites the very numerous neutral or unconscious elements—who up to now have been hesitant and rather favourable to the Revolution—to take a firm stand against it. And finally it kills the faith of many of its own partisans.

6. *Such a state of affairs* not only *diverts the march of the Revolution,* but also *compromises the work of defending it.*

In place of having active social organizations (unions, cooperatives, associations, federations, et cetera) active, alive, healthily co-ordinated, capable of assuring the economic development of themselves against the danger of reaction (relatively mild under

these circumstances) there exists, once more, a few months after the beginning of the disastrous statist practice, a handful of careerists and adventurers in power, incapable of "justifying" and substantially fortifying the Revolution that they have horribly mutilated and sterilized. Now they are obliged to defend themselves (and their partisans) against increasingly numerous enemies, whose appearance and growing activity are primarily the consequence of their own failure. Thus, instead of a natural and easy defence of the Social Revolution, which gradually affirms itself, one witnesses once more the disconcerting spectacle of failing power defending, by any means, and often the most ferocious, its own life.

This false defence is naturally organized from above, with the help of old and monstrous political and military methods "which have been proven", absolute control by the Government over the whole population, formation of a regular army blindly disciplined, creation of professional police institutions and of fanatical special bodies, suppression of freedom of speech, press, assembly, and especially of action, inauguration of a régime of repression and terror, et cetera.

It is a question, once more, of the training and brutalization of individuals to obtain a wholly submissive force. With the abnormal conditions under which events occur, all these procedures rapidly acquire an aspect of violence and despotism. The decay of the Revolution continues apace.

8. The "revolutionary power" in bankruptcy inevitably runs up against not only enemies of "the right", but also opponents of the left, all those who feel themselves supporters of the true revolutionary idea which has sprained its foot, those who fight for it and who draw themselves up in its defence. These attack the power in the interest of the true Revolution.

But having tasted the poison of domination, of authority and its prerogatives, having persuaded itself and seeking to persuade the world that it is the only really revolutionary force able to act in the name of the "proletariat", believing itself "obliged" and "responsible" for the Revolution, confusing through an inevitable aberration the fate of the latter with its own, and finding pretentious explanations and justifications for all of its acts, the power neither can nor will admit its failure and disappear. On the con-

trary, the more it feels itself at fault and threatened, the more it sets about furiously to defend itself. It wants to remain master of the situation at any price. It even hopes, still and always, to "straighten things out".

Knowing perfectly that it is a question, one way or another, of its very existence, the power ends by no longer discriminating its adversaries; it no longer distinguishes its own enemies from those of the Revolution. More and more guided by a simple instinct of self-preservation, and less and less capable of withdrawing, it begins to strike, with a crescendo of blindness and impudence, in all directions, left as well as right. It strikes without distinction all those who are not with it. Trembling for its own fate, it destroys the best forces of the future. It stifles the revolutionary movements which, inevitably, have arisen once more. It suppresses *en masse* the revolutionaries and the simple workers guilty of wanting to raise the banner of the Social Revolution again.

Acting thus, fundamentally impotent, strong only through terror, it is obliged to conceal its hand, to deceive, to lie, and to slander, since it considers it a good idea not to break openly with the Revolution and to maintain its prestige intact at least abroad.

9. But while crushing the Revolution it is not possible to lean on it. Also it is impossible to remain suspended in the void, supported by the precarious force of bayonets and circumstances. Therefore, in strangling the Revolution, the power is obliged to insure itself, more and more clearly and firmly, with the aid and support of reactionary and bourgeois elements, disposed through expediency to be of service to it and to deal with it.

Feeling the ground slipping from beneath its feet, becoming more and more detached from the masses, having broken its last connections with the Revolution and created a whole privileged caste of big and little dictators, servitors, flatterers, careerists, and parasites, but impotent to achieve anything really revolutionary and positive, after having rejected and destroyed the new forces, the power feels obliged to consolidate itself, to make overtures to the forces of reaction. It is their company that it seeks more and more frequently and more and more willingly. It is with them that it gives ground, not having any other way of insuring its life. Having lost the friendship of the masses, it seeks new sympathies. It hopes that it can some day betray them. But meanwhile it

becomes further involved every day in anti-revolutionary and anti-social activity.

The Revolution attacks it more and more energetically. And the power, with a fury all the more violent, helped by arms that it has forged, and by forces which it has drawn up, fights the Revolution. Soon the latter is completely defeated in this unequal struggle. It is at the point of death and disintegration. The agony ends in a corpse-like immobility. The slide has reached the bottom of the slope. [Here] is the abyss. The Revolution has had its day. Reaction is triumphant—hideously painted, arrogant, brutal, bestial.

Those who have not yet understood these truths and their implacable logic have understood nothing about the Russian Revolution. And that is why all these blind men, the "Leninists", the "Trotskyists", and all their kind are incapable of explaining plausibly the bankruptcy of the Russian Revolution and of Bolshevism—the bankruptcy which they are forced to admit. (We are not speaking here of the Western "Communists". They want to remain blind).

Having understood nothing about the Russian Revolution, having learned nothing from it, they are ready to repeat the same sequence of evil errors: political party, conquest of power, government ("workers and peasants"!), State ("Socialists"), Dictatorship ("of the Proletariat")—stupid platitudes, criminal contradictions, disgusting nonsense! It will be unfortunate for the next revolution if it re-animates these stinking corpses, if again it succeeds in dragging the labouring masses into this macabre game. It can only give rise to other Hitlers which grow in the decay of its ruins. And once more "its light will go out for the world".

Let us recapitulate the elements of the situation here:

The "revolutionary" government ("Socialist" or "Communist") is inaugurated. Naturally it wants full and complete power for itself. It is a command. (Otherwise what purpose has it?)

It is only a question of time until the first disagreement between the governors and the governed will arise. This disagreement crops up all the more inevitably inasmuch as a government, whatever it may be, is impotent to solve the problems of a great revolution, yet in spite of this, it wants to be right in everything,

monopolize everything, retain for itself the initiative, the truth, and responsibility of action. This disagreement is always turned to the advantage of the rulers, who quickly learn to impose their authority by various means. And subsequently all initiative passes inevitably to these rulers, who become, little by little, the masters of the governed.

That accomplished, the "masters" cling to power, despite their incapacity, their inadequacy, their incompetency. They believe themselves, on the contrary, the only bearers of the Revolution. "Lenin (or Stalin), like Hitler, is always right". . . . "Workers, obey your leaders! They know what they are doing and they are working for you". . . . "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" ("so we can command you better".) But this latter part of the slogan is never uttered aloud by the "genial leaders" of the "workers' parties".

Thus, inch by inch, the rulers become the absolute masters of the country. They create privileged classes on which they base themselves. They organize forces capable of sustaining them, and defend themselves fiercely against all opposition, all contradiction, all independent initiative. Monopolizing everything, they take over the whole life and activity of the country. And having no other way of acting, they oppress, subjugate, enslave, exploit. They repress all resistance. They persecute and wipe out, in the name of the Revolution, everyone who will not bend to their will.

To justify themselves, they lie, deceive, slander.

To stifle the truth, they are brutal. They fill the prisons and places of exile; they torture, kill, execute, assassinate.

That is what happened, exactly and inevitably, to the Russian Revolution.

Once well established in power, having organized its bureaucracy, its Army, its police, having found the money and built a new State called "Workers' ", the Bolshevik government, absolute master, took into its own hands completely the fate of the Revolution. *Progressively*—to the extent that it increased its forces of demagogic propaganda, coercion, and repression—*the Government nationalized and monopolized everything, including speech and thought.*

It was the State—and therefore the Government—which took possession of the soil, of all the lands. It became the true landlord.

The peasants, as a mass, were little by little transformed, first into State farmers, and later, as will be seen, into veritable serfs. It was the Government which expropriated the works, factories, mines—in short, all the means of production, communication, and exchange. And finally, *it was the Government which became the sole master of the nation's press and of all other means of spreading ideas.* All publications, all printed matter in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—including even visiting cards—are produced, or at least rigorously controlled, by the State.

In short, the State—therefore the [Bolshevik] government finally became the only repository of all truths [in the Russian domain], the sole proprietor of all material and spiritual goods therein, and the sole initiator, organizer, and animator of the whole life of the country, in all of its ramifications.

The 150,000,000 "inhabitants" were progressively transformed into simple fulfillers of the Government's orders, into veritable slaves of the Government and its innumerable agents. "Workers, obey your leaders!"

All the economic, social, and other organizations, without exception, beginning with the Soviets and ending with the smallest cells, became the simple administrative organs of the State enterprise, [forming in effect] a sort of "exploiting corporation of the State": organs wholly subordinated to its "central administrative council" (the Government), supervised closely by agents of the latter (the official and secret police) and deprived of all semblance of independence.

The authentic detailed history of this evolution, completed twelve years ago—an extraordinary history, unique in the world—would require a volume in itself. We will return to it later in these pages to give some indispensable details.

THE READER already knows that the stifling of the Revolution, with its disastrous logical consequences, inevitably incited a reaction more and more intense, and sustained by the elements on the left, who did not envisage the Revolution in the same way [as the Bolsheviki] and drew themselves up to defend it and enable it to progress. The most important of these refractory movements grew up in the ranks of the left Social Revolutionaries and among the

Anarchists.

This rebellion of the left Social Revolutionary Party was that of a rival political and statist party. Its differences with the Communist Party and its disillusionment because of the disastrous results of the Bolshevik Revolution finally compelled it to oppose the Bolsheviks. Forced to leave the government in which it had collaborated for some time with [Lenin's party], it launched an increasingly violent struggle against it. Anti-Bolshevik propaganda, attempted uprisings, and terrorist acts were used.

The left Social Revolutionaries participated in the famous assassination in Leontievsky Alley. And they organized the assassination of the German General Eichhorn in the Ukraine and of the German Ambassador Mirbach in Moscow—two violent demonstrations against the dealings of the Bolshevik government with that of Germany. Later they inspired some local uprisings, which were quickly put down. In that struggle they sacrificed some of their best forces.

Their leaders, Maria Spiridonova, B. Kamkov, A. A. Kareline, and others, as well as certain anonymous militants, behaved with much courage in these occurrences. However, if the left Social Revolutionaries had achieved power, their actions inevitably would have been exactly like those of the Bolshevik Party. The same political system inescapably would have led to the same results.

Fundamentally, the left Social Revolutionaries rose up primarily against the hegemony and the monopoly of the Communist Party. They claimed that if power were shared equally by two or more parties, instead of being monopolized by a single one, everything would be for the best. In the nature of things, this was a distinct error.

The active elements of the laboring masses, who, having understood the reasons for the bankruptcy of Bolshevism, attempted a battle against it, knew this well. They only supported the left Social Revolutionaries in a very restricted way. Their resistance was quickly broken, and they did not create any great echo in Russia.

Resistance of the Anarchists, however, was in places much farther-reaching, despite a swift and terrible repression. Having as its goal the realization of the other idea of the Revolution, and

having taken everywhere, in the course of events, an important place, this struggle and its vicissitudes merit the reader's full attention.

We must add that, deliberately distorted and later suppressed by the Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and by-passed by subsequent events on the other, this epic has remained unknown (except in interested circles), not only by the public at large but even by those who have more or less studied the Russian Revolution. Despite its importance, it remains outside of their investigations and their documentation. Rarely in the course of human history has an idea been so disfigured and slandered as Anarchism has been.

Generally, too, they are not even concerned with Anarchism. They exclusively attack "Anarchists", considered by all governments as "No. 1 Public Enemies", and everywhere presented in an exceptionally unfavourable manner. In the best cases, they are accused of being madmen, "plain crazy", or "half-crazy". More often they are portrayed as "bandits", "criminals", senseless terrorists, indiscriminate bomb-throwers. To be sure, there have been, and are, terrorists among the Anarchists, as there are among the followers of other political and social organizations and tendencies. But, precisely because they regard the Anarchist *idea* as being too seductive and dangerous to tolerate the masses becoming interested in it and understanding it, the governments of all countries and of all shades of opinion take advantage of certain acts of violence committed by Anarchist terrorists to compromise that idea itself, and they smear not only those terrorists but also all the militants, whatever their methods.

As for the Anarchist thinkers and theoreticians, they are treated most frequently as "utopians", "irresponsible dreamers", "abstract philosophers", or "extravagants", whose ideas are dangerously interpreted by their "followers", and as "mystics", whose ideas, even if they are beautiful, have nothing in common with real life, nor with men as they are. (It is claimed, on the bourgeois side, that the capitalist system is stable and "real", and on the Socialist side, that the authoritarian Socialist idea is not utopian—this in spite of the inextricable chaos and enormous social calamities, accumulated for centuries by the first, and in spite of the memorable bankruptcies "achieved" in a half century of applica-

tion by the second).

Very often they simply seek to ridicule the [Anarchist] idea. Do they not try to make the ignorant masses believe that Anarchism is a system "renouncing all society and all organization", according to which "everybody can do what he likes"? Do they not say to the public that anarchy is synonymous with disorder, and this in the face of the real and inconceivable chaos of all the non-Anarchist systems that have been tried up to now?

That policy towards Anarchism, due primarily to its integrity and the impossibility of taming it (a technique which has worked very well with Socialism), in view of its refraining from all "political" activity, bears its own fruits: a mistrust, even a fear and general hostility—or at least indifference, ignorance, and ingrained incomprehension—which spring up wherever it appears. This situation long rendered it isolated and impotent. But for some time, slowly, and owing to the force of events and propaganda, public opinion has evolved in relation to Anarchism and Anarchists. The deception is beginning to be recognized. Perhaps the day is not far off when the vast masses, having understood the Anarchist idea, will turn against the "deceivers" (I had almost written "hangmen"[1]) by taking an increased interest in the martyred idea and following a natural psychological reaction.

(Certain admissions and truths that the press was obliged to publish during the events in Spain [the civil war there], as well as certain other facts more or less well known already have produced a salutary effect and helped the libertarian idea to gain ground).

As for the Russian Revolution, the attitude of the Bolshevik government with regard to the Anarchists surpassed by far, in deception, slander, and repression, that of all other former and present governments. The rôle that the libertarian concept played in the Revolution and the fate that it met there will eventually be widely known, despite the customary stifling. For a fairly long period, that rôle was considerable.

[1]The words in French are *bourreurs* and *bourreaux*—one of Voline's rare puns.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

The revelations, which have been accumulating, bit by bit, not only throw a new light on past and current events but also a bright light on the course to be followed. And they permit one to foresee and better understand certain important phenomena which, beyond any doubt, will occur in the course of happenings in the near future.

For all these reasons the reader has the right—and even the duty—to understand the facts which will be disclosed here. What was the activity of the Anarchists in the Russian Revolution? What exactly was their rôle and their fate? *What was the real "weight" and what was the destiny of "this other idea of the Revolution"* represented and defended by the Anarchists? Our study will answer these questions at the same time as it gives indispensable details about the true rôle, the activity, and the system of Bolshevism. We hope that this presentation will help the reader to orient himself in relation to serious current and future events.

Despite their irreparable retardation and their extreme weakness, despite also all sorts of obstacles and difficulties, and finally, notwithstanding the sweeping and implacable repression of which they were the object, the Anarchists were able, here and there, and especially after October, 1917, to win lively and profound sympathy. Their ideas achieved prompt success in certain regions. And their numbers increased rapidly, despite the heavy sacrifices in men, which were inflicted on them by events.

In the course of the Revolution the activity of the Anarchists exercised a strong influence. It had marked effects in the first place, because they were the only ones who opposed *a new concept of the Social Revolution* to the thesis and action of the Bolshevists, more or less discredited in the eyes of the masses—and then, because they [the Anarchists] propagated and defended that concept, to the extent of their strength and despite inhuman persecution, with a disinterested and sublime devotion to the end, until a time when the overwhelming numbers, frenzied demagogy, knavery, and unprecedented violence of their adversaries forced them to succumb.

We should not be at all astonished by this [initial] success nor by its non-fulfilment. On the one hand, thanks to their integrated courageous, and self-sacrificing attitude, thanks also to their con-

stant presence and action in the midst of the masses, and not in the "ministries" or bureaux; and thanks, finally, to the striking vitality of their ideas in the face of the practice of the Bolsheviki, which soon became questionable, the Anarchists found—in every area where they could act—friends and adherents. (One has the right to suppose that if the Bolsheviks, fully aware of the danger that this success represented to them, had not put an end, immediately, to the activity and propaganda of the libertarians, the Revolution might have taken a different turn and led to different results).

But on the other hand, their retardation in relation to events, the greatly restricted number of their militants capable of carrying on an extensive oral and written propaganda in an immense country, the lack of preparation of the masses, the generally unfavourable conditions, the persecutions, and the considerable loss in men—all these circumstances limited drastically the extent and continuity of the Anarchists' work, and facilitated the repressive action by the Bolshevik régime.

Let us go on to the facts.

In Russia the Anarchists have always been the only ones who spread among the masses the idea of the true, popular, integral, emancipating Social Revolution.

The Revolution of 1905, with the exception of the Anarchist component, marched under such slogans as "democracy" (bourgeois), "Down with Tsarism!", "Long live the democratic Republic!". Bolshevism itself did not go farther at that time. Anarchism was then the only doctrine which went to the root of the problem and warned the masses of the danger of a political solution.

As weak as the libertarian forces were then, in comparison to the democratic parties, the [Anarchist] idea already had gathered around it a little group of workers and intellectuals who protested, here and there, against the snare of "democracy". True, their voices were sounding in the desert. But that did not discourage them. And soon a few sympathisers and a movement of sorts grew up around them.

The Revolution of 1917 grew and spread, in the beginning, like a flood. It was difficult to foresee its limits. Having overthrown absolutism, the people "made their entry into the arena of

historical action".

In vain did the political parties try to stabilize their positions and adapt themselves to the revolutionary movement. Steadily the working people went forward against their enemies, leaving behind them, one after another, the different parties with their "programs". The Bolsheviks themselves—who formed the best organized party, the most ardent and determined aspirant to power —were obliged to alter their slogans repeatedly to be able to follow the rapid development of events, and of the masses. (Remember their first slogans: "*Long live the Constituent Assembly!*" and "*Long live workers' control of production!*"

As in 1905 the Anarchists were, in 1917, the only defenders of the true and integral Social Revolution. They held constantly to their course, despite their restricted numbers, their financial weakness, and their lack of organization.

During the summer of 1917 they supported, both by word and action, the agrarian movements of the peasants. They also stood with the workers when, long before the October *coup*, the latter took over industrial enterprises in various places and tried to organize production on a basis of autonomy and workers' collectivity.

The Anarchists fought in the front ranks of the workers' and sailors' movement of Kronstadt and Petrograd on July 3, 4, and 5. In Petrograd they set an example by taking over the printing houses in order that workers' and revolutionary journals should appear.

When, in that summer, the Bolsheviki displayed towards the bourgeoisie a more audacious attitude than the other political parties, the Anarchists approved this, and considered it their revolutionary duty to combat the lies of bourgeois and Socialist governments which called Lenin and the other Bolsheviks "agents of the German government".

The Anarchists also fought in the advance guard in Petrograd, Moscow, and elsewhere, in October, 1917, against the Kerensky coalition government [the fourth provisional régime]. It of course goes without saying that they marched, not in the name of any other power, but exclusively in the name of the conquest by the masses of their right to construct, on truly new bases, their own economic and social life. For many reasons which the reader

knows, that idea was not put into practice, but the Anarchists fought, and to the end, alone for this just cause.

If, in this regard, there are grounds for reproaching them, it is only because they did not take time to reach an agreement among themselves and did not present, to a satisfactory degree, the elements of a free organization among the masses. But we know that they had to take account of their small numbers, their exceedingly slow concentration, and especially, of the absence of all Syndicalist and libertarian education of the masses themselves. Time was needed to remedy this situation. But the Bolsheviks, deliberately and specifically, did not allow either the Anarchists or the masses the time in which to overcome these retardations.

In Petrograd, it was again the sailors from Kronstadt, who, coming to the capital for the decisive struggle in October, played a particularly notable part. And among them were numerous Anarchists.

In Moscow, the most perilous and critical tasks during the hard fighting in October, fell upon the famous *Dvintsi* (the Dvinsk regiment). Under Kerensky, this whole regiment was imprisoned for refusal to take part in the offensive on the Austro-German front in June, 1917. It was always the *Dvintsi* who acted when it was necessary to dislodge the "Whites" (the *Kadets,* as they were known in that period) from the Kremlin, from the "Metropole", or from other sections of Moscow, and in the most dangerous places. When the *Kadets,* reinforced, resumed the offensive, it was always the *Dvintsi* who exerted themselves to the utmost to defeat them, during the ten days of struggle. All of [the *Dvintsi*] called themselves Anarchists, and marched under the command of two old libertarians, Gratchov and Fedotov.

The Anarchist Federation of Moscow, with a part of the Dvinsk regiment, marched first, in order of combat, against the forces of the Kerensky government. The workers of Presnia, of Sokolniki, of Zamoskvoretchia, and other districts of Moscow, went into battle with libertarian groups in the vanguard. Presnia's workers lost a fighter of great valor: Nikitin, an Anarchist worker, invariably in the front rank, was mortally wounded toward the end of the battle, in the center of the city. Several dozen other Anarchist workers also lost their lives in these struggles and lie in the common grave in Red Square in Moscow.

After the October Revolution, the Anarchists, despite the divergence of ideas and methods which separated them from the new "Communist" power, continued to serve the cause of the Revolution with the same perseverance and devotion. We should remember that they were the only ones who rejected the principle of the Constituent Assembly, and that when the latter became an obstacle to the Revolution, as they had foreseen and predicted, they took the first step towards its dissolution. Subsequently they fought with an energy and self-abnegation recognized even by their opponents, on all the fronts against the repeated offensives of reaction. In the defense of Petrograd against General Lavr G. Kornilov (August, 1917), in the fight against General Kaledin in the South (1918), and elsewhere, the Anarchists played a distinguished rôle.

Numerous detachments of partisans, large and small, formed by the Anarchists or led by them (the detachments of Mokrusov, Tcherniak, Maria Nikiforova, and others, without speaking for the moment of Makhno's partisan Army), and including in their ranks a great number of libertarians, fought in the South without a rest from 1918 to 1920 against the reactionary armies. And isolated Anarchists were on all the fronts as simple combatants, lost among the mass of worker and peasant insurgents.

In places, the Anarchist strength quickly grew. But Anarchism lost many of its best forces in that fearful fighting. This sublime sacrifice, which contributed powerfully to the final victory of the Revolution, materially weakened the libertarian movement in Russia, then scarcely formed. And unfortunately, its forces being employed on the various fronts against the counter-revolution, the rest of the country was deprived of them. Meanwhile Anarchist activity and propaganda suffered notably.

In 1919 especially, the counter-revolution led by General Denikin, and later by General Wrangel, made still greater inroads into libertarian ranks. For it was primarily the libertarians who contributed to the defeat of the "White" Army. The latter was put to flight not by the Red Army in the North, but rather in the South, in the Ukraine, by the insurgent peasant mass, whose principal force was the partisan Army called Makhnovist, which was strongly impregnated with libertarian ideas and led by the Anarchist, Nestor Makhno. And as for revolutionary organizations,

the libertarian groups of the South were the only ones who fought in the Makhnovist ranks against Denikin and Wrangel.

Here is a piquant detail: While in the South, the Anarchists, momentarily free to act, were heroically defending the Revolution, and paying with their lives, the "Soviet" government, really saved by this action, was furiously repressing the libertarian movement in the rest of the country. And as the reader will see, as soon as the danger in the South was ended, the repression also fell on the Anarchists in that region.

Likewise the Anarchists played a large part in the struggles against Admiral Alexander Kolchak in Eastern Russia and in Siberia, where they lost more militants and sympathizers.

Everywhere the partisan forces, including in their ranks a certain number of libertarians, did more of the job than the regular Red Army, and everywhere the Anarchists defended the fundamental principle of the Social Revolution: the independence and freedom of action of the workers on the march toward their true emancipation.

CHAPTER 3
The Anarchist Organizations

Participation of the Anarchists in the Revolution was not confined to combatant activity. They also endeavored to spread among the working masses their ideas about the immediate and progressive construction of a non-authoritarian society, as an indispensable condition for achieving the desired result. To accomplish this task, they created their libertarian organizations, set forth their principles in full, put them into practice as much as possible, and published and circulated their periodicals and literature.

We shall mention some of the most active Anarchist organizations at that time:

1. The Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda, which bore the name of *Golos Truda,* meaning The Voice of Labor. It had as its object the dissemination of Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas among the workers. This activity was carried on at first in Petrograd from the summer of 1917 to the spring of 1918, and later, for some time, in Moscow. That organization's paper, also called *Golos Truda,* began as a weekly and subsequently became a daily. And the organization also founded an Anarcho-Syndicalist publishing house.

Immediately upon taking power, the Bolsheviks set about impeding, in all ways, this activity in general and the appearance of that journal in particular. And finally, in 1918-19 the "Communist" government liquidated the Propaganda Union organization completely, and afterward the publishing house also. All the members were either imprisoned or exiled.

2. The Federation of Anarchist Groups of Moscow.—This was a relatively large organization, which in 1917-18 carried on intensive propaganda in Moscow and the provinces. It published a daily paper, *Anarchy,* of Anarcho-Communist tendencies, and

it, too, established a libertarian publishing house. And it was sacked by the "Soviet" government in April, 1918, though some remains of that movement survived until 1921, when the last traces of the former Federation were "liquidated" and the last of its militants "suppressed".

3. The *Nabat* Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of the Ukraine.[1]—This important organization was created at the end of 1918 in Ukrainia, where at this time the Bolsheviks had not yet managed to impose their dictatorship. It distinguished itself everywhere by positive, concrete activity, proclaimed the necessity for an immediate and direct struggle for non-authoritarian forms of social structure, and worked to elaborate the practical elements.

Playing a significant rôle with its agitation and extremely energetic propaganda, the Confederation aided greatly in the spreading of libertarian ideas in the Ukraine. Its principal paper was *Nabat*. It strove to create a unified Anarchist movement (based, theoretically, on a sort of Anarchist "synthesis") and to rally all the active Anarchist forces in Russia, *without regard for* [specific] *tendency,* into a general organization. And it did unify nearly all of the Anarchist groups in the Ukraine, incorporated some groups in Great Russia—and tried to found a Pan-Russian Anarchist Confederation.

Also, developing its activity in the central coal-mining region, the Confederation entered into close relations with the movement of revolutionary partisans, peasants, and city workers, and with the nucleus of this movement, the *Makhnovtchina.* It took active part in the fighting against all forms of reaction: against the *hetman* Skoropadsky,[2] against Petlura, Denikin, Grigoriev, Wrangel, and others. In these struggles it lost nearly all of its best militants.

Naturally it attracted the wrath of the "Communist" power, but under the conditions existing in the Ukraine it was able to resist repeated attacks [from that direction]. Its final and complete liquidation by the Bolshevik authorities took place at the end of

Nabat in Russian means Tocsin, or Alarm.

[2] In past centuries *hetman* was the title of the elected leader of the independent Ukraine. Installed in power by the Germans, Skoropadsky appropriated this title.

1920, several of its militants being shot without even the semblance of a trial.

Apart from these three organizations of fairly large scope and of more or less widespread activity, there existed others of lesser importance. Almost everywhere in Russia, in 1917 and 1918, there arose Anarchist groups, movements, and tendencies, generally of slight import and ephemeral, but in places quite active —some independent, others in co-operation with one of the three organizations cited above.

Despite some divergencies in principle and tactics, all these movements were in agreement on fundamentals, and performed, to the limit of their strength and opportunities, their duty to the Revolution and to Anarchism, and sowed among the laboring masses the seed of a really new social organization—anti-authoritarian and federalist.

All eventually met with the same fate: brutal suppression by the "Soviet" authority.

CHAPTER 4
The Unknown Anarchist Press in the Russian Revolution

WE HAVE quoted earlier some editorials from Golos Truda, organ of the Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda, showing the attitude of that organization toward the taking of power by the Bolsheviki, the peace of Brest-Litovsk, and the Constituent Assembly.

It is proper to supplement these with other quotations, which will give the reader details of the various points of disagreement between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists, and [will be enlightening] on the position of the latter concerning the problems of the Revolution, and finally, on the very spirit of the two conceptions.

The Anarchist press in Russia during the revolutionary period being practically unknown [1] outside of that country, some of these extracts will provide distinct revelations [for many who read them in the following pages].

Golos Truda appeared first on August 11, 1917, five and a half months after the outbreak of the Revolution, and therefore with a long and irreparable delay. Nevertheless the comrades energetically set to work. The task was hard, for the Bolshevik Party already had won over the great majority of the working masses. In comparison to its activity and influence, those of the Propaganda Union and its [new weekly] were of little importance. Slowly and with difficulty the work progressed. There was hardly any place for it in the factories of Petrograd. Everybody there followed the Bolshevik Party, read its papers, saw only its inter-

[1] Voline's text in French reads "totally unknown outside of Russia". The word *totally* has been changed to *practically* above because some copies of Russian Anarchist publications *did* reach Russian émigrés in the United States in that period, having been smuggled in by emissaries of the underground. Particularly, specimens of such literature found their way to the headquarters of the Union of Russian Workers in New York City.

pretations. No one paid attention to a wholly unknown organization, to "bizarre" ideas that didn't resemble at all those which were spoken and discussed elsewhere.

However, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union quickly acquired a certain influence. Soon it began to be listened to. Its meetings rapidly succeeded in creating fairly strong groups in Petrograd itself and its suburbs—in Kronstadt, Oboukhovo, Kolpin, et cetera. The weekly was successful; its circulation kept increasing, even in the provinces, despite all obstacles.

Under the existing conditions, the principal task of the Union consisted of intensifying its propaganda, to make itself known, and to attract the attention of the laboring masses to its ideas and its attitude toward the other social tendencies. The burden of this task fell mainly on its periodical, oral propaganda then being greatly restricted because of lack of means.

Three periods can be discerned in this organization's very short life: 1. Before the October Revolution; 2. During this second revolution; 3. After it.

In the first period, the Union fought simultaneously against the government of the moment (Kerensky's) and against the danger of a political revolution (toward which everything seemed to converge), and for a new social organization on a Syndicalist and libertarian basis. Each number of *Golos Truda* contained clear and definite articles on the way in which the Anarcho-Syndicalists conceived the constructive tasks of the Revolution to come. Such, for example, were a series of articles on the rôle of the factory committees; articles on the tasks of the Soviets, and others on how to resolve the agrarian problem, on the new organization of production, and on exchange.

In several articles—and especially in its editorials—the paper explained to the workers in a concrete manner, what the real emancipating Revolution ought to be, according to the Anarcho-Syndicalists.

Thus, in an editorial entitled "The Impasses of the Revolution", in its initial issue,[1] *Golos Truda,* after reviewing the development of that revolt and analyzing the crisis through which it passed in August, 1917, declared that it conceived future revolutionary action in a way which did not at all resemble that of the Socialist

[1] August 11, 1917.

writers. The organization for which it spoke, it said, was strongly opposed to the "programs" and "tactics" of the various parties and factions: Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, left Social Revolutionaries, right Social Revolutionaries, *et al.*

If it had been possible [the editors declared] for us to have raised our voice earlier, at the very beginning of the Revolution, in the first days and weeks of its free start, of its magnificent unfolding, and its ardent, unlimited aspirations, we would have immediately, from those first moments, proposed and defended methods and actions absolutely different from those preconceived by the Socialist parties. We are strongly opposed to the "programs" and "tactics" of all these parties and factions: Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, left Social Revolutionaries, right Social Revolutionaries, et cetera. We would have pointed out other goals for the Revolution. And we would have suggested other tasks for the toiling masses.

The long years of our work abroad were consecrated to propaganda for an entirely different array of ideas on the Social Revolution and its course. Alas, our thought did not penetrate into Russia, separated from other countries by a police barrier. Today our forces are rallying here. And we consider it our first duty, our most sacred task, to take up this work immediately in our own land—at present the land of freedom . . . We must open new horizons for the laboring masses, must help them in their quest.

Golos Truda saw the Revolution then as temporarily blocked in an impasse, while the Russian masses were at rest, as if plunged in awkward reflection. And there must be action, it contended, so that this reflection would not remain sterile. The halt must be realized in such a way that the new revolutionary wave would find the masses further prepared, more conscious of the goals to be attained, the tasks to be performed, the course to follow. Everything humanly possible must be done so that the coming wave would not dissipate itself again in a start without results.

"From this moment," the editors averred, "we will point out the means of getting out of this impasse—means of which the whole periodical press, without exception, does not say a single word."

In its second issue,[1] the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ asked a timely question:

[1] *Golos Truda,* August 18, 1917.

"We are living in a critical period. The scales of the Revolution are in motion—now slowly, now convulsively. They will continue this movement for some time. Then they will stop. Will the Russian workers know, in opportune time, while their scales are still oscillating, how to throw on their tray a new idea, a new principle of organization, a new social basis? It is on this that much—if not all—of the destiny and result of the Revolution depend."

Confidence in the ability of the country's masses to carry on effectively was voiced in an editorial headed "Questions of the Hour", in the third issue [1] of *Golos Truda*:

We say to the Russian workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionists: Above all, continue the Revolution. Continue to organize yourselves solidly and to unite your new organizations: your communes, your unions, your committees, your Soviets. Continue—with firmness and perseverence, always and everywhere—to participate more and more extensively and more and more effectively, in the economic activity of the country. Continue to take into your hands, that is, into the hands of your organizations, all the raw materials and all the instruments indispensable to your labor. Continue to eliminate private enterprises.

Continue the Revolution! Do not hesitate to face the solution of all the burning questions of the present. Create everywhere the necessary organizations to achieve those solutions. Peasants, take the land and put it at the disposal of your committees. Workers, proceed to put in the hands of and at the disposal of your own social organizations—everywhere on the spot—the mines and the subsoil, the enterprises and establishments of all sorts, the works and factories, the workshops, and the machines.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik Party oriented itself more and more toward it *coup d'état*. It was fully aware of the revolutionary state of mind of the masses, and hoped to take advantage of it—that is, to take power.

Criticizing that orientation, the editors of the Anarcho-Syndicalist periodical commented further on the situation in its third issue. They said that a logical, clear, and simple solution was offered to those for whom they spoke, a solution which arose of itself, and which they had only to utilize, resolutely, boldly.

[1] August 25, 1917.

It is necessary [*Golos Truda* held] to decide and to pronounce the last word suggested by the very logic of events: *We have no need of power.* In the place of "power" there are the unified organizations of the toilers—workers and peasants—which should became "the masters of life". Supported by the revolutionary formations of soldiers, these organizations should not help someone to "take power" but take directly into their own hands the land and other elements and instruments of labor, establishing everywhere, on the spot, a new social and economic order.

The simple "natives" and the "cowards" would peacefully accept the new situation, the editors continued. The bourgeoisie —remaining without soldiers and without capital—naturally would remain without power. And the organizations of the workers, joined together, would put on solid feet, by common agreement, production, transport, and communications, exchange and the distribution of merchandise—all on new bases, creating for this purpose, in line with actual necessity, the indispensable organizations of co-ordination and centers. Then—and only then—would the Revolution have conquered.

Moreover, *Golos Truda* maintained, while the struggle had the character of a quarrel between the political parties for power, and the laboring masses were dragged into these quarrels and divided by political fetishes, there could be no question either of the victory of the Revolution nor even of a really serious social reconstruction of life. And hope was expressed that the masses, driven by the very exigencies of life, would end by arriving at this solution, the elements of which were already sowed by the objective conditions of the time and the whole existing situation.

"It goes without saying," the editors concluded, "that we do not intend to be prophets. We only foresee a certain *possibility,* a certain *tendency* which *may not develop.* But, in the latter case, the present Revolution will not be the true Great Social Revolution. And then, the solution of the problem—which we have just sketched out—will fall to one of the future revolutions."

Finally, on the eve of the October Revolution, an editorial in *Golos Truda* said:

Either the Revolution will follow its course, and the masses—after tests, misfortunes, and horrors of all sorts, after errors, delays, collisions, recoveries, new retreats, perhaps even a civil war and

a temporary dictatorship,—will finally *learn* to raise their consciousness to a level that will enable them to apply their creative forces to a positive activity of their own autonomous organizations, everywhere, on the spot. Then the safety and the victory of the Revolution will be assured.

Or. the masses will *not yet learn* to create in the cause of the Revolution their organizations co-ordinated and consecrated to the building of the new life. Then the Revolution will sooner or later be extinguished. For only these organizations are capable of leading it to complete victory.

The attitude of the Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda *at the very moment of the October coup d'état* has been sufficiently described in an earlier chapter. Let us recall only that, having expressed their reservations, the Anarchists participated aggressively in that revolution—wherever it resulted in action by the masses (as in Kronstadt and Moscow) for reasons and for goals specified in the reservations themselves.

After the October Revolution, during the few months of its difficult existence, and though increasingly circumscribed by the Bolshevik government,[1] the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union followed from day to day the action of the latter and the march of events. *Golos Truda,* which appeared daily for three months, explained to the workers all the mistakes, all the misdeeds of the new power, *developing, at the same time, its own ideas and indicating the way to apply them,* in conformity with its point of view. Such a procedure was not only its right, but incontestably its strictest duty.

In a series of articles[2] the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ insisted on the necessity of immediate abandonment of *the political methods*

[1] To give an idea of the way in which the Government acted during these few months let us cite certain of its practices. Master of electric current, it cut off, nearly every morning around 3 o'clock, the line that fed the Union's printing shop. The current returned around 5 or 6 o'clock (or did not return at all). Thus the paper could not appear until 9 or 10 o'clock, when all employed persons being at work, no one could buy it. Also, the newsboys were jostled, chased, and sometimes arrested on false pretexts. At the Post Office up to 50 per cent. of the copies of *Golos Truda* were deliberately "lost". In short, it was necessary to struggle constantly against sabotage by the Bolshevik authorities.

[2] Those articles in *Golos Truda* were: *And Afterward*?, October 27. 1917; *The Second Revolution,* November 3/16; and *The Declaration and Life,* November 4/17.

of the dictatorship over the masses and allowing the working people freedom of organization and action.

1. From the beginning of the Revolution—from the month of March—[that publication commented] the laboring masses should have created everywhere their workers' organizations, *class* organizations, outside of parties, co-ordinating the action of those organizations and concentrating all of it on the only real goal to be attained: expropriation of all elements indispensable to labor and, finally, to the nation's economic life.

2. The educated, conscious, experienced men, the intellectuals, the specialists, should have, from the first days of the Revolution, preoccupied themselves *not with political struggles* and slogans, *not with the "organization of power", but with that of the Revolution.* All these men should have helped the masses in the development and perfecting of their organizations, helped them to employ their vigilance, energy, and activities for the preparation of *a real Revolution,* both economic and social. No one, at that moment, would have impeded them in this task.

In fact, *Golos Truda* argued, the peasants and the soldiers were in perfect agreement about this collective duty—and the real Revolution would have advanced rapidly, *by the correct route.* It would, from the beginning, the editors declared, have sent its roots down deep, all the more in that the masses themselves, in a spontaneous drive, already had created a network of organizations, and it was only a question of giving this constructive task a certain amount of order and a higher consciousness. If, from the start, the Anarcho-Syndicalist audience was told, all the sincere revolutionists and the whole Socialist press had concentrated their attention, their strength, and their energy on that task, the course of the Revolution would have been different—but that was precisely what had not been done.

Where Power begins, the Revolution ends, another article in the same periodical pointed out.[1] When the "organization of power" began, it asserted, the "organization of the Revolution" ended—for the expression "revolutionary power" had as much sense as "warm ice" or "cold fire", meaning none at all.

If the Revolution is definitively put on the political road, in

[1] *The New Power,* in *Golos Truda,* November 4/17, 1917.

line with the recipe for "the organization of power", [that article continued], we will see what happens: As soon as the first revolutionary victory of the insurgent people (a victory so dearly won, precisely by reason of the same political methods) becomes an established fact, our "second Revolution" will stop. In place of the free and creative revolutionary activity of the masses everywhere on the spot—an activity indispensable for the consolidation and development of this victory—we shall witness a disgusting "trafficking" around the power at the center, and, finally, an absurd "activity" of the new central "power"—of a new "government of all the Russias".

The Soviets and the other local organizations will of course be subordinated to the central Soviet and the Government. They will become in fact the authority of the leaders of the [Bolshevik] Party, installed in the center. And in place of a natural and independent union of free cities and a countryside constructing the new economic and social life on their own, we shall see "a strong State center", and "a firm revolutionary power" which will prescribe, order, impose, chastise.

Nothing between those two possibilities was capable of being achieved, *Golos Truda* avowed—either it would be like that or the authority would not exist. For (one read) phrases about "local autonomy" in the presence of a vigorous State power had always been, were then, and would be in the future, empty phrases.

But the workers were warned by the Anarcho-Syndicalist spokesmen that if they expected to get from the new power the Social Revolution, Socialism, abolition of the capitalist system, and their own real emancipation, they would be sorely disappointed—because neither that power nor any other knew how to give all those [advantages] to the laboring masses. Then certain facts were set forth to prove that the Bolsheviki finally would end by degenerating and betraying the Russian people.

This meant, it was pointed out, that from Bolshevism to capitalism the front [facing the working masses] was one continuous, unbroken barrier, a result of the inevitable laws of political struggle.

You will say to us [the editors went on] that you will protest, that you will struggle for your rights, that you will rise up and act everywhere on the spot in full independence. Very well. But be prepared for your activities to be called "arbitrary" and "anarchic"; for the "Socialists in power" to assail you under this pretext, with

all the strength of their "Socialist" authority; and, finally, for opposition from the classes of the population that are satisfied with the new government (classes to which it has given something), as well as all those who have had enough of the Revolution and who only feel anger and hatred toward you.

In your struggle against Tsarism you had nearly the whole country with you. But in your struggle against Kerensky you already were more isolated.

If now you let the new power consolidate itself (and if events permit it), and if subsequently you have to combat this power, once it has become strong, you will not be more than a handful. They will wipe you out pitilessly as "madmen", as "dangerous fanatics", as "bandits" . . . And they will not even put a stone on your graves.

On the eve of the seizure of the Government by the Bolsheviks, *Golos Truda* dealt with the situation under the title, *From Impasse to Impasse.*[1] Therein it held that the only way to put the Revolution on the correct and proper course would be to renounce the consolidation of central political power.

"All power is a danger to the Revolution," that editorial set forth. "No power can lead the Revolution to its real goal. Nowhere in the labyrinths of political contrivance can be found the key which will open the promised door of the Temple of Victory."

Help the masses at once, everywhere on the spot, to create their own class organizations outside the parties [so the Anarcho-Syndicalist journal admonished its readers]. Help those organizations to form a harmonious whole, first locally, then regionally, et cetera, by means of Soviets representing such organizations: not authoritarian Soviets, but simply instruments of contact and coordination. Orient these organizations toward the only important goal—that of their progressively taking over production, exchange, communication, distribution, et cetera. Begin thus, immediately, to organize the social and economic life of the country on new bases. Then a sort of "dictatorship of labor" will begin to be achieved, easily and in a natural manner. And the [people generally] will learn, little by little, to do it. . . .

Socialist and Anarchist methods of action were compared by

[1] No. 15, November 6/19, 1917.

Golos Truda in comment headed *The Organization of the Revolution.* [1]

The Socialist parties were represented as saying: "To organize the Revolution it is necessary, before anything else, *to take power in the State* and organize this new power. With the help of it, the [nation's] whole economy also will pass into the hands of the State."

But, in contrast, the Anarchist position was indicated thus: "To organize the Revolution, it is necessary, before anything else, *to take over the economy* and organize it. By this means, Power and the State (recognized by the Socialists themselves as an 'inevitable' temporary evil) will be eliminated."

To take over the economy (the expansion of Anarchist procedure continued) meant taking possession of agriculture, industry, and exchange. Also it meant having control of all the means and instruments of production, labor, and transportation, the soil and sub-soil, the mines, factories, works, workshops; the stocks and the depôts; the stores, the banks; the railways, the stations; the maritime and river transports; and all means of communication—the postal, telegraph, and telephone systems.

To take *power* [*Golos Truda* averred] a political party is needed. For, in fact, it is a *party* which takes possession of power, in the persons of its leaders. That is why the Socialists incite the masses to organize into a party in order to support them at the moment of struggle for the seizure of power.

To take over *the economy* a political party is not indispensable. But indispensable to that action are the organizations of the masses. independent organizations remaining outside of all political parties. It is upon these organizations that falls, at the moment of the Revolution, the task of building the new social and economic system.

That is why the Anarchists do not form a political party. They agitate, either directly in the mass organizations or—as propagandists—in groups and ideological unions.

Concluding, the Anarcho-Syndicalist paper posed these fundamental questions: "How must one, how can one organize without power? By what rules must one begin? How must one proceed?"

[1] No. 16, November 7/20, 1917.

It promised to answer the three queries in a precise and detailed way. And in fact it answered them in several articles which appeared before the periodical's suppression in the spring of 1918.[1]

The latter part of 1917 was exceedingly hard for the Russian people, for the war continued to exhaust and paralyze the country. More and more tragic did the situation in the interior become.

Golos Truda dealt with the far-flung and grim national scene under the title *What Must Be Done?* saying:

The conditions of existence of the working masses grow worse from day to day. Poverty increases. Hunger is a permanent guest. Cold is there, but the problems of rent and heating are not solved. A very large number of factories are closing their doors for lack of means, fuel, and raw materials, and frequently the owners are in flight. Russia's railroads are in a lamentable state. and the economy of the country is totally ruined. . . .

A paradoxical situation is created.

At the top is the "workers and peasants' " government, the center invested with all power and possessing the strength to exercise it. The masses wait for solutions from [that régime]. It issues decrees, in which it says very well what the improvements *should be,* (and what it preconceives is well below the needs of the masses), but to the essential question, *how to achieve them,* it replies: "The Constituent Assembly!"

At the bottom everything remains as before. The masses groan with hunger—but the speculation, gain, and disgusting commerce "under the table" continues in fine shape. The masses are impoverished—but the shops (even the display windows) are filled with garments, meat, vegetables, fruits, and jams . . . And do not doubt that in the city there are a goodly number of objects of prime necessity.

The masses are poor—but the banks are rich. The masses are thrown into the streets, factories close their doors, and it is impossible to "take in hand" the abandoned enterprises, because of lack of capital, fuel, and raw materials.

The countryside needs the products of the city. The city needs the products of the countryside—but the situation is such that it is almost impossible to effect the exchange.

[1] *Golos Truda,* No. 19, November 18/December 1, 1917. Other notable articles or editorials in that publication which deserve mention here are *The War, The Famine,* and *The Last Stage,* in No. 17, November 8/21, 1917; *Warning,* in No. 20, and *The Immediate Tasks,* in No 21.

Criticizing the weak behavior of the Bolshevik government in the face of this disastrous condition, the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ proposed certain means which seemed to it to be the quickest, simplest, and most effective way of meeting the pressing first problem of the nation.

In several articles (*What Must be Done?*, *Warning*, and others) the editors of *Golos Truda* submitted for consideration by Russia's workers a concrete and detailed program of urgent measures. [This impressive program well deserves tabular listing here. It follows].

1. Requisition by the workers' organizations of products of primary necessity and organization of stock piles and depôts of distribution—to ward off famine;
2. Creation of people's restaurants;
3. Methodical organization of house committees (of tenants), street committees, and district committees, to cope with the insufficiency of lodgings, and at the same time to begin to replace landlords by collectives comprised of occupants—in other words, immediate and progressive socialization of dwelling places;
4. Immediate and progressive requisition by workers' organizations of enterprises abandoned by their owners;
5. Immediate organization of public works, to undertake urgently needed repair work in the cities, on the railroads, and elsewhere;
6. Immediate confiscation of a part of the funds in the banks, to permit the development of the new collective production;
7. Resumption of regular relations between the cities and the countryside;
8. Exchange of products between the workers' organizations and the farmers.
9. Socialization of the railroads and all the means of communication;
10. Requisition and socialization of the mines as rapidly as possible to enable the immediate supplying (through the workers' organizations) of factories, railroads, dwelling houses, et cetera, with raw materials [and fuel].

The Bolshevik government was far from envisaging such measures, for they would have tended, necessarily, to diminish its rôle, relegate it to a position of secondary importance, speedily

demonstrate its uselessness and finally go beyond it. It could not allow this.

Not wanting to trust the masses with anything, but not feeling itself strong enough yet to attempt anything decisive through political action, that regime let things drag along, confining itself meanwhile to timid and ineffectual economic remedies. Especially did it seek to provide for the most pressing necessities by political police and military procedures: disorderly requisitions, arbitrary and brutal, with the help of detachments of troops stirred up by the leaders (procedures which, among other consequences, had the effect of turning the countryside against the cities and destroying all its interest in the Revolution), repressions, violence, etcetera.

While protesting vehemently against the false course on which the Bolsheviks, according to the Anarchists, were putting the Revolution, and criticizing their system, the Anarchists were the only ones to advocate truly popular, truly Socialist, and at the same time, concrete measures, which would, they declared, orient the Revolution immediately toward the road of the real Social Revolution.

The Bolsheviks naturally paid no attention to them. And the masses, manipulated and subjugated by Bolshevism, could neither hear the anarchists nor take a stand on their own.

In this context, I will cite a complete article from *Golos Truda* (No. 18, February 13, 1918) devoted to a Bolshevik governmental decree curbing the freedom of the press. The article clearly delineates the position of the two opposed ideologies with reference to a concrete problem.

FALSE ROUTE

If one wants to note, from day to day, the facts and events proving incontestably that it is not possible to achieve the true Social Revolution "from above," one could fill dozens of newspaper columns with them . . . But we have other fish to fry at the moment, and we leave this task to the patient future historians of our Revolution. Without doubt they will discover in its archives abundant documentation demonstrating eloquently "how not to wage a revolution."

As for us, we have really had enough of repeating every day, that neither true freedom nor true emancipation of the world of labor, nor the true society, nor the new culture--in short, that *no real Socialist value* can be achieved by means of a centralized "State apparatus" actu-

ated by political power in the hands of a party. Is it not time to have done with this subject, in the hope that, tomorrow, life itself will make this truth (basically so simple) known with perfect clarity, to all the blind?

However, they are so numerous, these blind men.

Only a few days ago we had in our hands a resolution saying the following: While the Anarchist idea is the best, the most glorious, and the purest of ideas, the moment for its realization has not yet come. It is indispensable first to consolidate the ("Socialist") revolution that has been accomplished. "We are convinced," the resolution concluded, "that Anarchism will come and triumph *after Socialism."*

Such is the current banal conception of Anarchism!

To the good "citizen" Anarchism is either the bomb and pillage, horror and chaos, or else, in the best case, a beautiful dream, the paradise "after Socialism." For the good "citizen" does not understand Anarchism. He judges it on the basis of rumor. He is so naive, so credulous, the poor thing.

And the authors of the resolution don't understand it any better.

If one represents Anarchism as the attainment of an epoch in which one will live in a land of Cockaigne, then yes, its time has not yet come (and in this sense also, the time for "Socialism" has not yet arrived).

But if (as the authors of that resolution did) one looks on the problem from the point of view of the *road* toward emancipation, of *the very process* of the struggle for freedom, then it is absurd to imagine that in taking this road we follow another. Then one has to choose either one or another way.

Anarchism is not only an idea, a goal; it is, before anything else, *also* a method, *a means of struggling for the emancipation of man. And,* from this point of view, we maintain clearly, categorically, that the "Socialist" way (that of authoritarian and statist Socialism) cannot achieve the goals of the Social Revolution, cannot lead us to Socialism. Only the Anarchist method is capable of solving that problem.

The essential thesis of Anarchism as a method of struggle, as a way toward true Socialism, is just this: It is impossible to get to Anarchism and to freedom in general "through Socialism" or "after Socialism." It is not "through" Socialism that we may reach it. *One cannot achieve Anarchism in any way except by going straight to the goal, by the direct Anarchist road.* Otherwise one never will arrive.

It is impossible to achieve freedom by means of State Socialism.

Being supporters of the conquest of Socialism by means of a revolution from above, the "Socialists," in our opinion, have gone astray; they are on a false route. Either they will be forced to turn around and regain the correct route–just, straight, Anarchist–or they will become involved and involve the whole Revolution in an *impasse.*

That is what Anarchism maintains. That is why it struggles against "Socialism" today. And that is what life is going to show the blind men presently. . .

We will not mention here all the various facts which have already

reinforced our conviction. But we consider it necessary to concentrate on a single, striking fact.

We have just received a copy of the *"Provisional rules concerning the manner of editing all printed matter, periodical or not, in Petrograd."*

We have always considered the implacable struggle against the bourgeois press the immediate task of the workers in time of social revolution.

Suppose then for an instant, dear reader, that this Revolution had followed, from its beginning, our Anarchist course; that the workers' and peasants' organizations had grown up and federated themselves into a class organization; that they had taken into their own hands the economic life of the country; and that they had fought, and in their own way, the opposing forces. You will easily understand that the press, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie, would have been fought by these organizations in an essentially different manner from that employed by our "Socialist" government in combating the "bourgeois" press.

In fact, is it the bourgeois press with which these "Provisional Rules" are concerned?

Read Articles 2 to 8 of these "rules" attentively. Read especially the paragraph entitled *"Prohibition and Confiscation."* You will have tangible proof that, from the first to the last article, these "rules" suppress, *not* the bourgeois press, *but all vestiges of freedom of the press in general.* You will see that it is a typical act, establishing *the most rigorous censorship for all publications which have the misfortune of displeasing the Government,* whatever their nature. You will discern that this act sets up a multitude of formalities and impediments that are absolutely useless.

We are convinced that the real Revolution of the workers would fight the bourgeois press with other methods. We are convinced that the true militants and men of action of the real Social Revolution would never have recourse to *a censorship law;* a banal, typically bureaucratic and authoritarian law; a law seeking to protect the existing government against all kinds of criticism or opposition, *whether it comes from the right or the left;* a law, finally, which introduces a whole series of superfluous and barbaric brakes, impediments, and obstacles from the point of view of freedom of expression.

We've said more than once that every path has its peculiarities. Glory to the gods! the "peculiarity" in question only affects Petrograd so far. We hope that the revolutionary masses of the rest of the country are more awake than our decadent capital, and that they render futile the application of these "Provisional Rules" in the provinces.

We also hope that these *provisional* "rules" don't become *definitive.*

The Anarchists supposed that, the printing houses and all the means of application having been taken directly into the hands of the workers' organizations, the latter would refuse—which would

have been simple and healthy—to print and publish counter-revolutionary writings. Thus, as in other fields, no political (governmental, police, et cetera) action would be felt necessary and no censorship would develop.

It [seems almost] unnecessary to state that the "rules" in question were speedily extended to the whole country, and later served as the basis for laws dealing with the press which completely suppressed *all non-governmental* (non-Bolshevik) *publications.*

In the article headed *The Immediate Tasks,* the Anarcho-Syndicalist periodical offered detailed suggestions on the matter of solving various current problems. Its essential chapters included: *Organization of Rationing, How to Resolve the Housing Question, Factories and Works, The Banks, The City and the Country, Raw Materials and Fuel, Transportation,* and *Public Works.*

Naturally several articles were devoted to the peasant problem [1] by *Golos Truda,* as well as numerous editorials concerning the workers' problem. [2]

To conclude these examples of published comment let me, as a curiosity, quote from an article in the same organ entitled *Lenin and Anarchism.* [3] Thus:

The "Socialists", swollen with sentiments of order, prudence, and circumspection, reproach Citizen Lenin constantly for his leanings towards Anarchism.

The replies of Citizen Lenin reduce themselves, every time, to the same formula: "Be patient. I am not yet *altogether anarchistic.*"

The Anarchists attack Citizen Lenin because of his weakness for Marxist dogma. The replies of Citizen Lenin reduce themselves, every time, to the same formula: "Be patient, I am no longer

[1] *The Peasant Job,* in No. 22, and others.

[2] *The Workers' Course,* in No. 7 of the daily *Golos Truda; The Workers' Task,* in No. 11; *The Workers' Congress* (no date nor serial number given), and others.

[3] *Golos Truda,* No. 5, December 19, 1917/January 1, 1918.

altogether a Marxist."

We wish to say, finally, to all those who may be disturbed in their minds about this: Do not be disturbed. Don't expect anything. *Citizen Lenin is not at all an Anarchist.*

And after a short analysis of Lenin's position in relation to the Revolution, the article goes on to state that he is right when he says: "We reject parliamentarianism, the Constituent Assembly, et cetera, because the Revolution has given rise to the Soviets." Yes, *Golos Truda* agrees, the Revolution gave rise, not only to the Soviets, but in general to a just and healthy tendency toward a class organization, outside of parties, a-political, non-statist—and the welfare of the Revolution is wholly bound up with this tendency.

Citizen Lenin would be right [the Anarcho-Syndicalist journal continues] if he had recognized a long time ago, in the dawn of his youth, that the true Revolution should take precisely this course. But alas, at that time, he was a "pure Marxist".

And now? Oh, of course, the tendencies, more and more consciously Anarchist, of the masses, bother him. Already the attitude of the masses has forced Citizen Lenin to turn back to the old road. He is in the process of yielding, of bending. He was only going to keep "the State", "authority", "the dictatorship", for an hour, for a little minute, for "the transitional moment". And afterward? Afterward, there would be Anarchism, almost-Anarchism, "Soviet Anarchism", "Leninist Anarchism".

And the Marxists, filled with the spirit of method, wisdom, and mistrust, exclaimed in horror: "You see? You hear? You understand? It's terrible. Is this Marxism? Is this Socialism?"

But, great gods! Coudn't you foresee, Citizen Socialists, what Citizen Lenin would say when his power was consolidated and it became possible for him no longer to have to pay attention to the voice of the masses?

He then returned to his usual beaten path. He created a "Marxist State" of the most authentic kind. And at the solemn hour of complete victory, he will say to you: "You see, gentlemen, I am again a complete Marxist."

There remains a single question, the principal one: Will not the masses become, before that happy hour, "entirely Anarchist", and prevent Citizen Lenin from returning to complete Marxism?

I regret that I am unable to quote here several other texts from *Golos Truda,* from *Anarchy* (of Moscow), and from *Nabat* (of the Ukraine). For I do not have the necessary copies at hand,

and under the conditions existing at this writing I cannot procure them. I can assure you, however, that, except for a few details and shades, the contents of all the serious libertarian periodicals in Russia in that period were [substantially] the same. And what has been quoted in the foregoing pages should suffice to give the reader a clear idea of the theses, the position, and the activity of the Anarchists [in Russia] during the Revolution.

It is fitting to add that the Anarchist Confederation of the Ukraine (*Nabat*), later suppressed by the Bolshevik power, organized, at Kursk and at Elizabethgrad, in November, 1918, and April, 1919, respectively, two congresses which accomplished considerable constructive work. They drew up a plan for libertarian action for the whole Ukraine, and their resolutions offered studious solutions for various burning problems of the hour.

The period between October, 1917, and the end of 1918 was significant and decisive. *It was in the course of those months that the fate of the Revolution was decided.* For a certain time, it oscillated between the two ideas and the two courses. A few months afterward, the die was cast—and the Bolshevik régime succeeded in establishing definitely its military, police, bureaucratic, and capitalist (new model) State.

The libertarian idea, which more and more ran counter to it, was stifled.

And as for the vast laboring masses, they had neither enough strength nor enough consciousness to be able to say the decisive word.

CHAPTER 5
Some Personal Experiences

CERTAIN PERSONAL experiences, chosen from among thousands like them, will serve as illustrations to make the particular nature of this period in Russia more understandable.

One evening near the end of 1917, in Petrograd, two or three workers from the former Nobel oil refinery (it had employed about 4,000) came to the meeting place of our Union and told us the following:

The refinery having been abandoned by the owners, the workers there decided, after numerous meetings and discussions, to operate it collectively. They had begun to take steps toward this end, and, among other moves, had addressed themselves to "their government" (the Bolshevist régime), asking for aid in the realization of that project.

But the Commissariat of the People at Work informed them that unfortunately it could do nothing for them under the prevailing conditions. It could get them neither fuel nor raw material nor orders nor clientele, nor means of transport, nor money for operating expenses.

So the workers prepared to get the plant going again through their own efforts, hoping to find what they needed to continue production and insure an adequate market.

Now the workers' committee at the refinery had been advised by the Commissariat of Work that inasmuch as its case was isolated and since a large number of enterprises were in an analogous position, the Government had decided to close all these establishments and to lay off the workers, giving them two or three months' wages, and to wait for better times.

However, the workers of the Nobel refinery did not agree with the Government. They wanted to continue work and produc-

tion, being certain now of success. They told the Government so. The Bolshevik régime answered with a categorical refusal, declaring that as director of the whole country and responsible to that whole, it could not allow each plant to act according to whim, for this would end in inextricable chaos; that, as a government, it was obliged to take general action; and that, so far as operations in the Nobel plant were concerned, the action could be only to terminate them.

Called together by the plant committee in a general assembly, the workers objected to this decision. Then the Government proposed a new general meeting, where its representatives could come and definitively explain the true sense of the ruling and the necessity for its application.

The workers accepted that proposal. And it was thus that some of them who had relations with our Union came to tell us about the situation, and to ask that we send a speaker to the meeting to expound the point of view of the Anarchists—for at that time this was still possible. The men at the plant, they said, surely would be glad to hear our opinion, so as to be able to compare the two theses, choose the better one, and act accordingly.

I was chosen as the delegate to that gathering, and was the first of those from outside to arrive. In a huge room the majority of the plant's workers were assembled. On an improvised platform in the center their committee sat around a table awaiting the appearance of the members of the Government. The attitude of the mass of toilers was grave, reserved. I took a place on the platform.

Soon the representatives of the Government arrived very "officially" and very solemnly, with shining brief cases under their arms. There were three or four of them, Mikhail Shlyapnikov himself, Commissar of the People at Work, as their leader.

He spoke first. In a dry official tone he repeated the terms of the Government's decision and expatiated the motives which led to it. He ended by declaring that that decision was positive, irrevocable, without appeal, and that, if they opposed it, the workers would commit a breach of discipline, the consequences of which would be serious both for themselves and for the whole country.

A glacial silence greeted this speech, except for some applause clearly Bolshevist.

Then the chairman announced that certain workers in the Nobel plant wished also to know the point of view of the Anarchist on the question at issue, and that, inasmuch as a spokesman for the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union was present, he would give him the floor.

I got up. The members of the Government, stupified, (obviously they had not expected this), looked at me with unconcealed curiosity, mixed with irony, unease, and spite. What happened then has remained faithfully engraved in my memory, it was so typical, instructive, and encouraging to my convictions.

Addressing the big audience of workers, I said to them in substance as follows:

"Comrades, you have been working for years in this plant. You wish to continue your free work here. You have a perfect right to do this. It is perhaps even your duty. In any case, the manifest duty of the Government—which calls itself yours—is to facilitate this task, to sustain you in your resolution. But the Government has just repeated to you that it is impotent to do it, and therefore it is going to close the plant and lay you off; this in spite of your decision and your interests. I declare before everything that from our point of view—I speak in the name of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union—the impotence of the Government (which calls itself yours) is not a reason to deprive you of your bit of bread honestly earned."

A salvo of applause greeted me.

"On the contrary," I continued, "those men, whether they call themselves members of the Government or anything else, ought to have congratulated you on your initiative, encouraged you, and said to you as we say to you: 'Seeing the impotence of the authorities, you have only one recourse, and that is to manage for yourselves and fight your way out by your own strength and means'. Your Government should add that, as such, it will do all within its power to assist you.

"As for me, I am not a member of the Government, nor do I wish to be—for no government, you see, is capable of doing what is necessary for you, nor of organizing human life in general. So I shall add another thing. I ask you one question: Have you

the strength and the means to try to continue the work? Do you think you can succeed? Could you, for example, create among your ranks small, active, mobile working units, some of which would occupy themselves with getting fuel, some with finding raw material, others with the question of delivery by railroad, and still others with clientele and orders?

"Everything, comrades, depends upon such action. If you can create what is necessary, if you think you can succeed, you have only to go to it, and the Government ('*your* Government') certainly ought not to find anything inconvenient in all this. On the contrary——.

"We, the Anarchists, are sure that the workers themselves, having various relatives, [at least] a few in all parts of the country, and understanding thoroughly the elements essential in their work —especially when there are 4,000 of you—will solve the problem much more simply and quickly than the Government. We think, then, that you have only to create mobile working units, bringing together men capable because of their knowledge, aptitude, and contacts, to act energetically and with success. Once their mission is finished, these working units would cease to exist and their members would rejoin the mass of workers in the plant. What do you think of that?"

Unanimous and prolonged plaudits were my answer. And at the same time several voices shouted: "Yes! Yes! Exactly! . . . We have prepared everything necessary . . . Yes, we *can* go on. We have considered the question for weeks."

"Attention, comrades," I went on. "You are lacking fuel. The Government has given up furnishing you with any. Without fuel the Nobel plant cannot run. Will you be able to get it for yourselves by your own means?"

"Yes, yes," a man responded. "There are fifteen men at the plant, all ready and organized to go into the countryside. Each one, through his contacts, will easily find the right sort of fuel for the plant."

"And to bring that fuel here?"

"We have already been in conference with the comrades on the railroads. We shall have cars and everything necessary. One of our groups is taking care of that."

"And as to the market?"

"No difficulty, Comrade. We know the clientele of the plant and we can readily dispose of the products."

I glanced at Shlyapnikov and the others. They were rolling their eyes terribly, and nervously tapping the table with their finger-tips.

"Well, my friends," I continued, "Under these circumstances our Anarchist advice is simple: Act, produce, go to it! However, one word more. It goes without saying that you will not act as capitalist bosses—no? You are not going to exploit the workers? You are not going to constitute yourselves as a corporation and sell shares?"

They laughed. And immediately some workers got up and said that of course all work would be done in a collective manner in perfect camaraderie, and only in order to be able to live. The plant committee would watch over the economy of the enterprise, the receipts would be divided equitably, and by common agreement, if there was an excess of receipts, it would form an operating fund. "And," they concluded, "if we commit acts contrary to the solidarity of the workers, we give the Government *carte blanche* to penalize us. In the opposite case, it has only to let us alone and to have full confidence in us."

"All right, my friends," I finished in turn, "you have only to get going. I wish you good courage and good luck."

A thunder of applause ensued. Extraordinary animation, replacing the previous torpor, now reigned in the big hall. On all sides the audience acclaimed our joint conclusion, and no longer paid any attention to the Government representatives, who sat glued to their chairs, immobile, their features drawn.

Shlyapnikov whispered something into the ear of the chairman, who shook his bell frantically. Finally calm was re-established. Then Shlyapnikov spoke again.

Coldly, although visibly angry, measuring his words and accompanying them with the gestures of an Army general, he asserted that, "as a member of the Government", he had nothing to change, nor to add to what he had said. Nor would he retract any part of it. He repeated that the decision of the Government to close the Nobel refinery was final.

"You yourselves put us in power," Shlyapnikov said. "You voluntarily, freely, entrusted us with the destinies of the country.

You had confidence in us and in our acts. You, the working class of the country, wished us to take care of your interests. So it's for us to know them, to understand them, to watch out for them. It goes without saying that it's our task to busy ourselves with the true general interests of the working class and not with those of this or that little fraction. We can't act—a child could understand this—in the interest of each separate enterprise. It is logical and natural to elaborate and establish plans of action for the whole of the nation, for both the workers and the peasants.

"These plans must safeguard the interests of the whole. The contrary, that is, to take or tolerate measures favoring a particular group, would be ridiculous, and contrary to the general interests of the people, and criminal toward the working class in its entirety. Our inability to solve immediately the various complex problems of this moment is transitory. It can be explained by the terrible actual conditions, after the evils we have lived through, the chaos we hardly have emerged from. The working class ought to understand this and be patient.

"The present situation does not depend on our wishes. It was not made by us. We all suffer from its painful and fatal consequences. They are the same for everybody, and will be for some time to come. So the workers must manage like everyone else, instead of looking for privileges for special groups. Such an attitude would be essentially bourgeois, egoistic, and disorganizing. If certain workers, pushed by the Anarchists, those petty-bourgeois wreckers *par excellence,* don't wish to understand, so much the worse for them! We have no time to waste with backward elements and their leaders."

And Shlyapnikov ended up by saying, in an aggressive menacing tone:

"In any event, I must warn the workers of this plant and also the Anarchist gentlemen, those professional wreckers, that the Government can change nothing in its carefully considered decisions; one way or another, it will make them be respected. If the workers resist, so much the worse for them! They will simply be laid off by force, and without indemnity. The most recalcitrant, the leaders, enemies of the proletarian cause in general, will expose themselves besides, to consequences infinitely graver. And as to the Anarchist gentlemen, let them take care! The Government

cannot tolerate their mixing in affairs that are none of their business, nor their inciting honest workers to disobedience. . . . The Government will know how to penalize them, and will not hesitate. Consider it said!"

That speech was received with extreme reserve.

After the meeting, the plant workers surrounded me, indignant, outraged. They had caught the deceitful note of Shlyapnikov.

"His speech was clever but false," they said. "In our case it is not a question of a privileged position. Such an interpretation betrays our real thought. The Government has only to let the workers and peasants act freely *throughout* the country. Then it will see: things will speedily reorganize themselves, and we'll come to an agreement to the satisfaction of everybody. And the Government will have fewer worries and fewer excuses to make."

Always in such cases the same two conceptions were manifested and opposed—the government-statist conception and the social-libertarian conception. Each had its reasons and its arguments.

What made the workers indignant were the threats against them and us. "A Socialist government should have recourse to other means to get at the truth," they contended. But they had no illusions about the outcome of the conflict. And, in fact, a few weeks later, the Nobel plant was closed and the workers laid off, all resistance being impossible against the measures taken by the "workers'" government against the workers.

Here is a memory with a different scene:

In the summer of 1918, after a sojourn at the revolutionary front against Germany, in the Ukraine, I revisited the little town of Bobrov, province of Voronezh, where my family lived.

The members of the local Bolshevik committee, all young people, knew me personally and knew of my ability as a teacher in adult education. They proposed that I organize the educational work of that region. At that time such undertakings bore the name of *Proletcult*, meaning Proletarian Culture.

I accepted on two conditions: 1. That I should receive no sort of remuneration, so that I could preserve full independence in methods and action; 2. That the complete independence of my educational activity was to be strictly maintained.

The committee accepted, and the town Soviet naturally confirmed this action. Then I called the first meeting of the new institution thus created, sending out a large number of invitations and notices to the labor unions in Bobrov, to [workers and peasants in] the surrounding villages, and to the intellectuals in that area.

On the evening of the meeting I found myself before some thirty sedate, distrustful, almost hostile individuals. Instantly I understood: these people had expected a standard meeting, a Bolshevik "commissar" with dictatorial gestures, revolver in his belt, giving orders and commands to be obeyed to the letter.

But this time these good folk met with something entirely different. Speaking to them as a friend, I gave them to understand at once that it was a question, in our work, of their own initiative, of their spirit, of their will and energy. I assured them that any intention to command, dictate, or impose anything at all upon them was completely foreign to me. And I invited them to establish, [of their own volition] and to the best of their ability, sound educational and cultural work in the region centering around Bobrov.

Then, addressing myself to their good will, and to their natural capacities, I specified, at the same time, my own rôle: a friendly and effective helper in the drawing up of plans and programs, and in recruiting a teaching force; with suggestions and advice from me based on my knowledge and experience. Too, I sketched out a rough scheme of what we could accomplish, if we worked together with all our hearts. An exchange of views, wholly free, followed my speech. And a certain amount of interest was awakened among the audience.

At least a hundred persons came to the second gathering in Bobrov, with the atmosphere much more friendly and confident. But I needed three or four meetings for the ice to be completely broken and mutual confidence fully established. Since my deep sincerity was beyond doubt and as the task seemed to everybody concerned interesting and achievable, a keen sympathy grew up among us all, and a great enthusiasm developed in some.

Then began a feverish activity, the scope and effects of which quickly surpassed all my expectations. Dozens of men, coming from the bosom of the people, and often scarcely educated themselves, were so eager about the project and set to work with such

ardor and dexterity, and with such a richness of ideas and resulting achievements, that soon I had only to combine and co-ordinate their efforts, or to prepare for more important and larger accomplishments.

Our meetings, always public, and at which the entire audience was at liberty to contribute ideas and efforts, began to attract the peasant men, and even the peasant women, from villages some distance from Bobrov. Our work was talked about throughout the whole region, and on market-days those educational meetings invariably attracted a highly picturesque crowd.

Presently an excellent people's theatrical troupe was organized and made ready to give roving performances, chosen with method and taste.

Quarters for us were quickly found and equipped for all our needs. Furniture was repaired like new, broken windows replaced, school supplies (notebooks, pencils, pens, ink, et cetera) unearthed in no time, whereas formerly their absence constituted a serious handicap. Such were the first steps in the new educational project. A library was instituted, the first gifts of books came in, and evening courses for adults began.

But the local authorities sent their reports to the Center, [by that time] in Moscow. Thus [the higher-ups] learned that I was acting according to my own free will, without bothering about "instructions" or "prescriptions" from above; and that we all were working freely, without submitting to the decrees and orders from Moscow which, for the most part, were not at all applicable in our region or were even totally inept.

One fine day I began to receive "from down there", through the intermediary of the Brobov Soviet, huge packages stuffed with decrees, prescriptions, rules, formal orders, programs, projects, and plans—every one completely fantastic and absurd. I was instructed to hold strictly to the text of all this stupid waste paper, these impossible and unrealizable orders.

I leafed through all that "literature" and continued my activity without thinking any more about it.

That was followed by an ultimatum: either submit or get out. Naturally I chose the latter alternative, knowing that submitting and applying the instructions from Moscow inevitably would kill the work we had undertaken. (I ask the reader to believe that

the work in itself interested me; I concentrated loyally on my professional duties, without any mention of my Anarchist ideas. It was not at all a question of any sort of "subversive" propaganda, and this question was never brought up in the orders addressed to me. The Center simply would not allow anyone *not* to follow its regulations blindly).

It was over. After a moving farewell meeting, where everyone felt that the work just coming into being already was compromised, I left Bobrov.

My successor, a loyal servitor of Moscow, followed the Center's instructions to the letter. Some time afterwards, [all of the adult students and other participants in the educational enterprise] deserted, and the school, which a short time before had been full of life, disappeared. And a few months later, this Proletarian Culture project failed lamentably all over the country.

Like the workers in the Nobel oil refinery in Petrograd, those in various enterprises in several cities and industrial regions wished to take certain measures on their own, either to keep going works that were threatened with being closed, or to assure and organize exchange with the countryside, or to cope with some difficulty or other: to improve defective service, resolve unsettled situations, correct mistakes, fill in gaps. *But systematically and everywhere, the Bolshevik authorities prohibited the masses from all independent action, although they themselves were most often incapable of acting effectively and opportunely.*

Thus, for example, the soviet of the city of Elizabethgrad (in Southern Russia), having confessed itself powerless to solve certain local economic problems of great urgency, and its bureaucratic procedures offering no hope of success, the workers of several plants requested of the president of that soviet authorization to deal with those problems themselves, to create the necessary organizations, and to group around them all the city's workers to make sure of an effective outcome.[1] In short, to act under the control of the soviet.

But as everywhere else those who made this proposal were

[1] In 1918-1919 this was still possible.

severely reprimanded and threatened with penalties for their "disorganizing" tactics.

At the approach of winter, several other cities lacked fuel, not only for the operation of industries but also for heating homes.

In Russia, dwellings were always heated with wood. In the forested parts of the country, which were very numerous, getting in a supply of fuel in opportune time—usually toward the end of summer—was very simple. Before the Revolution the owners of large firewood depots often hired the peasants in the neighboring villages to cut down the trees and move the fallen sections either to the nearest railroad or to the depot itself. In Siberia and regions in the North, this custom was universal. After the annual harvest, the peasants, free from all work in the fields, willingly undertook this task, for very low wages.

After the Revolution, however, the city soviets, transformed into administrative organs by the will of the Government, were formally charged with the necessary provisioning. Therefore it was up to them to deal with the peasants. And this was all the more necessary because the owners of the forests and firewood depots were not to be found, and the railroads functioned badly.

But because of their bureaucratic slowness—a disease typical of all official administrations—the soviets almost never managed to achieve this task in time to meet the need.

The propitious moment having come, the workers and inhabitants of the cities offered voluntarily to go and deal with the peasants and assure the delivery of the wood. Naturally the soviets refused, invariably describing this gesture as "arbitrary" and "disorganizing", and claiming that the provisioning of fuel would be done by the official units of the State, the soviets, according to a general plan set up by the central government.

As a result, either the cities remained without fuel or it was bought at fantastically high prices, the work having become exceedingly difficult and the roads being almost impassable after September, because of rain and mud. Often the peasants flatly refused to undertake this job in that season, even for high wages, not being tempted much by the paper *rubles* issued by the Bolsheviks. Then they were compelled to do it by military order.

I could fill dozens of pages with analogous examples, taken

at random from all fields. The reader has only to vary and multiply by himself those which I have mentioned: he never could go beyond the truth!

Everywhere in Soviet Russia and in all things the same phenomenon appeared—production, transports, exchange, and commerce fell into an inconceivable chaos. The masses were denied any right to act on their own initiative. And the "administrations" (soviets and others) were constantly bankrupt.

The cities lacked bread, meat, milk, vegetables. The countryside lacked salt, sugar, industrial products. Clothing rotted in the warehouses in the cities. And in the provinces no one had anything to wear.

Disorder, negligence, and impotence reigned everywhere and in everything. But when those interested wanted to intervene so that they might energetically solve all these problems, nothing could be done about it. The Government intended to "govern". It would not tolerate any "competition". The slightest manifestation of an independent spirit of initiative was called "a breach of discipline" and was threatened with severe penalties.

The grandest conquests, the most beautiful hopes of the Revolution, were in the process of disappearing. And the most tragic aspect was that the Russian people, on the whole, were not aware of it. They "let matters alone", confident in [the ability of] "their" government and in the future. The Government utilized the time it needed to set up an imposing coercive force, blindly obedient. *And when the people understood* [what had happened], *it was too late.*

These personal experiences and observations confirmed *factually* our fundamental ideal: that the true Revolution cannot be accomplished except by means of the *free* activity of millions of interested working people themselves. Once the Government mixes in, and takes the place of the people, the *life* of the Revolution leaves it; everything stops, everything retreats, everything has to be begun again.

Let no one say to us that the Russian people "didn't want to act", nor that "they had to be compelled by force" to act "for their own good in spite of themselves". All that is sheer invention. During a great revolution, the people ask for nothing better than

to act. What they have need of is the disinterested *help* of experienced revolutionaries, of educated men, specialists, technicians. The truth is that the castes, the groups, and the men desirous of power and privileges, stuffed with false doctrines and mistrusting the people, in whom they have no confidence, *prevent the people from acting, and, instead of helping them, seek to govern them,* to *lead them, and exploit them,* in a different way. And to justify themselves, they create the myth of their "powerlessness". So long as the people, that is, the laboring masses, of all countries do not understand this and do not veto the reactionary aspirations of all these elements, all revolutions will end in failure and the effective emancipation of Labor will remain an empty dream.

We have just said that the Russian people were not precisely aware of the mortal peril which confronted the Revolution.

It was natural, however, that, under the new conditions created by the Bolshevik government, the criticisms by and the ideas of the Anarchists, calling for freedom of initiative and action by the toiling masses themselves, found an increasingly wide echo among the country's population.

It was then that the libertarian movement began to achieve rapid success in Russia. And it was then that the Bolshevik régime, more and more disturbed by that success, decided to employ against the threatening Anarchism means approved by all governments—*an implacable repression,* reinforced by ruse and violence.

PART IV

REPRESSION

НАЧАЛЬСТВО (въ восхищеніи передъ новобранцемъ):
«Наконецъ-то я нашелъ идеальнаго солдата, который будетъ молча и безъ разсужденій выполнять всѣ мои приказанія!..»

The Commander (delighted with the new recruit): "At last, the perfect soldier—he'll follow all my orders silently and without thinking."

CHAPTER 1
The Preparations

ONE NOTABLE task had been successfully performed by the "Soviet power": in the spring of 1918 it already had pushed the organization of its governmental and statist *cadres—cadres* of police, the Army, and those of the "Soviet" bureaucracy—fairly far. Thus the base of the dictatorship was created, sufficiently solid, and completely subordinated to those who had established it and who were maintaining it. It was possible to count on it.

It was with these forces of coercion, disciplined and blindly obedient, that the Bolshevik government crushed several attempts at independent action which were made here and there.

Also it was with the help of those forces, rapidly enlarging, that it ended by submitting the Russian masses to its fierce dictatorship.

And it was with those same forces, once it was sure of the unreserved obedience and passivity of the major part of the population, that it turned against the Anarchists.

During the revolutionary days of October, 1917, the tactics of the Bolsheviki with regard to the Anarchists boiled down to this: to utilize the latter to the maximum as elements of combat and "destruction", helping them, to the necessary degree (with arms, et cetera) but supervising them closely.

However, when the victory was achieved and power won, the Bolshevik régime changed its method.

Let us cite a striking example:

During the hard fighting in Moscow in October, 1917, the staff of the *Dvintsi* (the Dvinsk regiment, previously referred to) was installed in the quarters of the Moscow Soviet. In the course of events a Bolshevik "revolutionary committee' also was set up in Moscow and proclaimed itself "the supreme power". And

directly the staff of the *Dvintsi*, known as [being composed of Anarchists], became the object of supervision, mistrust, and suspicion by that committee. A net of spies was spread around it. A sort of blockade impeded its movements.

Gratchov (an Anarchist who commanded the regiment) saw clearly that the Bolsheviks were concerned, not with the true Revolution, nor with the immediate problems of the new Russion nation, but only with rivalry and the taking of power. He felt that they were going to emasculate the Revolution and lead it to its ruin. A deep anguish seized him. In vain he asked himself how to seize and stop in time the criminal hand of the new power, ready to garrote the Revolution. And he conferred with several comrades who, alas, were powerless like himself.

For want of something better he had the idea of arming the workers as well as possible. He sent rifles, machine guns, and ammunition to several factories. Thus he hoped to be able to [help] prepare the masses for an eventual revolt against the new imposters.

But Gratchov soon perished, and suddenly. Summoned by the Bolshevik authorities to Nishni-Novgorod "on military business", he was shot, under exceedingly mysterious circumstances, by a soldier who didn't yet know how to handle a rifle. Certain indications impel us to suppose that he was assassinated by a mercenary in the pay of the "Soviet" power. [1]

Later all the revolutionary regiments of Petrograd and Moscow which had participated in the fighting in October were disarmed by the Government. In Moscow the first regiment to be disarmed (by force) was that from Dvinsk. And soon afterward, throughout the country, all citizens, without exception, and *including the workers and their organizations,* were ordered, under penalty of death, to turn in their arms to the Bolshevik military authorities.

[1] The circumstances connected with the death of the Anarchist Durruti in Spain in 1936 pointedly recall the Gratchov case.

CHAPTER 2
The Discharge

In the spring of 1918 persecutions of the Anarchists by the Russian "Communist" government began in a general, systematic, and decisive way. The peace of Brest-Litovsk concluded, the Lenin régime felt itself sufficiently solid to undertake a fundamental struggle against its adversaries "on the left"—the left Social Revolutionaries and the Anarchists.

It had to act methodically and prudently.

At first the Communist press, on orders from the Government, started a campaign of slander and false accusations against the Anarchists, growing more violent from day to day. At the same time, they actively prepared the ground in the factories, in the Army, and among the public, through meetings and lectures. Everywhere they sounded the spirit of the public. Soon the régime was certain that it could rely on its troops, and that the masses would remain more or less indifferent or powerless [in the face of drastic action against the leftist opposition].

Then, on the night of April 12, under a false and absurd pretext, [the quarters of] all the Anarchist organizations in Moscow—and principally those of the Federation of Anarchist Groups in that city—were attacked and sacked by troops and the police force. For several hours the capital took on the appearance of a city in a state of siege. Even artillery took part in the "action".

This operation served as a signal for the sacking of the libertarian organizations in nearly all the important cities of Russia. And as always the provincial authorities exceeded in zeal those in the capital.

Leon Trotsky, who for two weeks had prepared the blow, and who had carried out in person, among the regiments, an unbridled agitation against the "anarcho-bandits", had the satisfaction of being able to make his famous declaration: "At last

the Soviet government, with an iron broom, has rid Russia of Anarchism."

Eternal and cruel irony of human history: Fifteen years afterward Josef Stalin used the same formula and applied the same "iron broom" against Trotskyism, to the great indignation of Trotsky.

I confess that I have felt some sentiment of satisfaction about this act of poetic justice. [1]

That first aggression, however, was only a timid beginning, a "sketch", a try-out.

The *idea* of Anarchism was not yet declared outside of the law. And it is true that a certain freedom of speech, and of the press, or rather, of the profession of faith, though very restricted, still remained possible. In a relative measure the libertarian organizations—pale shadows of the past—survived the "catastrophe" and resumed their activity.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik Party crushed the Social Revolutionary Party (as well as other leftist factions, the "Maximalists", *et al*). We will not concern ourselves much with this—these struggles having had neither the same scope nor the same interest as that directed against the Anarchists. One might consider the duel between the left Social Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviki as a conflict between two political parties over the taking of power, which has only moderate interest for us.

We must mention, however, that, after having got rid, from the Government itself, of several members of the S.R. Party, the Communist Party made war on it without mercy. And by the end of the summer of 1918 the left Social Revolutionaries found themselves in the position of outlaws. Soon they disappeared as a party. Then, individually, their militants were tracked down all over the country and suppressed to the last man.

The tragic fate of the unfortunate Maria Spiridonova spells one of the most terrifying pages of this inhuman repression. Arrested, dragged from prison to prison, tortured mentally and perhaps physically, her days were ended in some filthy cell, if not

[1] These lines were written before the assassination of Trotsky.

in a cellar, by the bullets of the Cheka. (I lack precise knowledge about her death). And how many other militants of that party, whose only crime was to conceive differently the tasks and the course of the Revolution, had to undergo a like fate!

CHAPTER 3
Unrestrained Fury

In 1919-1920 the protests and movements of the Russian workers and peasants against the monopolistic and terroristic procedures of the "Soviet" power toward them were notably intensified. The Government, more and more cynical and implacable in its despotism, replied with increasingly accentuated reprisals.

Naturally the Anarchists again were body and soul with the deceived and oppressed masses in the open conflict. Supporting the workers, they demanded for them and their organizations the right to control production [of commodities] themselves, without the intervention of politicians. Supporting the peasants, they demanded for them independence, self-rule, and the right to deal directly and freely with the workers. In the names of both, they demanded the restitution of what the workers had achieved through the Revolution, and which had been "frustrated" by the "Communist" power, particularly the restoration of "a real free Soviet régime", re-establishment of "political liberties" for all revolutionary tendencies, et cetera. In short, they demanded that the gains of October, 1917, be returned to the people themselves—to the free workers' and peasants' organizations.

Naturally, too, the Anarchists unmasked and combatted, in the names of these principles, both in writing and by word of mouth, the policy of the Government.

As they had foreseen, the Bolshevik régime ended by making war on them also. After the first major operation in that direction in the spring of 1918, the persecutions continued in an almost uninterrupted manner, taking on a more and more brutal and decisive character. And by the end of that year, several libertarian organizations in the provinces were sacked once more. Those which by chance escaped this were not permitted by the authorities to do anything.

In 1919, about the same time as the repression in Great Russia, persecutions also began in the Ukraine. (For several reasons, the Bolshevik dictatorship was installed there much later than elsewhere). In every area where the Bolsheviki set foot, the libertarian groups were liquidated, their militants arrested, their publications suspended, their bookstores destroyed, lectures forbidden.

It is unnecessary to say that all these measures were carried out by police, military, or administrative order, and were wholly arbitrary, without accusation, explanation, or any judicial procedure. The model for such action had been established, once and for all, by the "precedent" instituted by Trotsky himself in the spring of 1918.

[Another fateful action] by Trotsky was his issuance, in the summer of 1919, of his now famous order No. 1824, declaring the so-called Makhnovist movement outside the law. Following that, Anarchists were arrested almost everywhere in Russia, at the same time as Nestor Makhno's partisans were. And very often they were immediately shot, simply on the order of a Red officer.

In the majority of cases, the suppression of the libertarian organizations was accompanied by acts of savage violence, and of senseless vandalism by the *Chekists* (Communist secret police) and the deceived, unnerved, or over-excited Red soldiers. The militants, men and women alike, were brutally treated, as "criminals". Their quarters were demolished, their books burned. It was a furious repression.

At the close of that summer, a general sacking of Anarchist organizations took place in the Ukraine. And by the end of the same year, there remained only remnants of an Anarchist movement in Russia.

[Here is an odd turn in Bolshevik history].

Early in October, 1920, the "Soviet" power, having need of the assistance of the revolutionary Makhnovist partisans in fighting Baron Peter Wrangel's "White" troops, effected an alliance with Makhno. According to the agreement on which that alliance was based, all imprisoned and exiled Anarchists were to have their freedom restored and be given the right to work openly in the Ukraine and anywhere in Russia.

Though naturally holding back on the fulfilment of that provision, the Bolsheviks had, however, to interrupt the prosecutions and release several militants. But as soon as Wrangel was defeated, the "Soviet" government treacherously attacked Makhno and again struck out violently at the libertarian movement in the Ukraine.

At the end of November, with Wrangel just vanquished, the authorities arrested in Kharkov many Anarchists gathered from many parts of Russia for a legal congress. At the same time, they tracked down libertarians all over the Ukraine, organizing a regular hunt, with beaters and ambushes, and taking as "hostages" parents, wives, and children—as if they wanted to have revenge for the recent forced concession and to make up for lost time, seeking now to exterminate "the wicked race of Anarchists" down to the children.

To justify this disgraceful action, the Bolshevik régime explained its break with Makhno on the ground of so-called treason by the latter, and invented a fantastic "great Anarchist plot against the Soviet power".

The real story of this purported plot is fantastic and deserves to be told. Thus:

Several days before the decisive victory over Wrangel, when the defeat of the latter was no longer in doubt, the central telegraph station in Moscow ordered all the stations in the provinces to shut off their receiving apparatus, and accordingly *not to take* an urgent and absolutely secret message from Lenin, which was supposed to be received only by two other main stations—the one in Kharkov and the other in Crimea.

This order was not obeyed by a libertarian sympathizer in charge of one of the stations in the provinces. And he took down the following telegram:

Determine the Anarchist strength in the Ukraine, particularly in the Makhnovist region. LENIN.

Several days later another telegram was sent under the same conditions:

Exercise active supervision over all Anarchists. Prepare docu-

ments as much as possible of a criminal nature of which they can be accused. Keep orders and documents secret. Send the necessary instructions everywhere. LENIN.

And after a few more days, the third and last laconic message:

Arrest all the Anarchists and incriminate them. LENIN.

All these telegrams were addressed to Christian Rakovsky, then president of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine, and to other military and civil authorities.

On receipt of the third telegram, the sympathetic telegraphist warned an Anarchist comrade, who hastened to Kharkov to apprise the libertarians there of the repression in preparation. But he arrived too late: the action already had been taken. Nearly all of the Kharkov Anarchists, and also those who had come for the congress, were in prison. Their quarters were closed.

Such was the "plot" of the Ukrainian Anarchists against the Soviet power.

At the time of the agreement between the government "of the Soviets" and Nestor Makhno, the Makhnovist delegation [which negotiated it] had officially established the number of persons imprisoned or exiled and requiring liberation at more than 200,000. For the most part, these were peasants arrested *en masse* for sympathizing with the Makhnovist movement. We do not know how many *conscious Anarchists* there were among them. And we will never know how many persons, in this period, were shot or disappeared without leaving any trace, in the various local prisons, many of which were secret and unknown to the public.

During the Kronstadt uprising in March, 1921, the Bolshevik government made new mass arrests of Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists. Again they organized a sweeping man-hunt across the country, seeking to capture every remaining militant who dared raise his voice. For, contrary to the lies spread by the "Soviet" power, inside Russia and elsewhere, the Kronstadt revolt and the movements which accompanied it were strongly imbued with libertarian spirit.

Any mass movement—a workers' strike, peasants' protests, or discontent among the soldiers or sailors, invariably had repercussions affecting the Anarchists. And after the Bolsheviki threw into prison individuals having no other connection with the libertarians except a community of ideas, or were relatives, or casual acquaintances. To admit openly having the same viewpoint as the Anarchists sufficed to send one to prison, from which one got out with difficulty, or generally not at all.

The circles of Anarchist youth were brutally suppressed in 1919 and again in 1921. These groups were engaged in teaching and studying communally, among other things, the Anarchist doctrine, with which it had most sympathy. The Bolshevik action was impelled simply by the desire to cut short the interest of the youth in libertarian ideas. Only the Marxian dogma remained acceptable [to the Government].

In the summer of 1921 the Soviet press announced that in the vicinity of Zhmerinka (a small city in the province of Podolia, in the Ukraine) 30 or 40 Anarchists living in that area and having connections in other cities in the Southern region, had been "discovered and liquidated"—that is to say, *shot*. This bit of candor by the Bolsheviks was an extremely rare phenomenon, explainable only by assuming an intention of cautioning such youth and discouraging them from continuing their activity. The names of all those who perished thus never could be determined. But it *was* established that they included some of the best militants among the libertarian youth.

Around the same time, and again according to the Soviet press itself, the Lenin government imprisoned (and shot some of them) in Odessa, the members of a fairly large and important Anarchist group which, among other action, was spreading propaganda in Soviet institutions and circles (even in the Odessa Soviet and in the Bolshevik Party's local committee). That constituted, the party press said, the crime of "high treason".

Official dispatches stated that 92 Tolstoyan (absolute pacifist) Anarchists were shot up to the end of 1922, chiefly for refusal to serve in the Army. And many Tolstoyans languished in prison.

One of these good pacifists found himself one day face to face with J. Peters, the infamous executioner of the Cheka (secret Communist police) in one of the Offices of that force. Miracu-

lously he was about to be set free. Waiting his turn, he was peacefully picking lice out of his heavy beard and throwing them on the floor. (In that period, lice were the most intimate friends of man in Russia. They were commonly referred to affectionately as *semashki*, from the name of Nikolai Semashko, People's Commissar of Public Health—stinging but suggestive irony).

"Why do you throw them down like that instead of killing them?" the astonished Peters asked.

"I never kill living creatures."

"Oh," said Peters, highly amused. "That's funny, really. You let yourself be bitten by lice, bed-bugs, and fleas? I must say you are crazy, my friend. I myself have suppressed several hundred men—bandits, that is—and it didn't bother me at all."

He could not get over his amazement and kept looking curiously at the peaceful Tolstoyan, taking him surely for a harmless idiot.

I could continue this list of martyrs to great length.

I could cite hundreds of instances where the victims were drawn into snares to be shot, either after "interrogation" and torture, or even on the spot, sometimes in a field, or at the edge of a forest, or in a railway car at an abandoned station.

I could cite hundreds of cases of brutal and disgraceful searches and arrests, accompanied by violence and all sorts of torments.[1]

I could give a long list of libertarians, many of them very young, who were thrown into prison or exiled into unhealthy regions, where they died after extended and terrible sufferings.

I could tell of revolting cases of individual repression resulting from shameless informing, cynical treachery, or repugnant provocation.

The Bolsheviki suppressed men for upholding an idea if it was not exactly that of the Government and its privileged clique. They sought to suppress the idea itself, and to wipe out all independent thought. Also they frequently suppressed men who knew and who could reveal certain facts.

I shall confine myself to a few individual examples, particularly odious.

[1] The author of this work was one of those subjected to violence by the Bolsheviki.

CHAPTER 4
The Case of Leon Tchorny and Fanny Baron

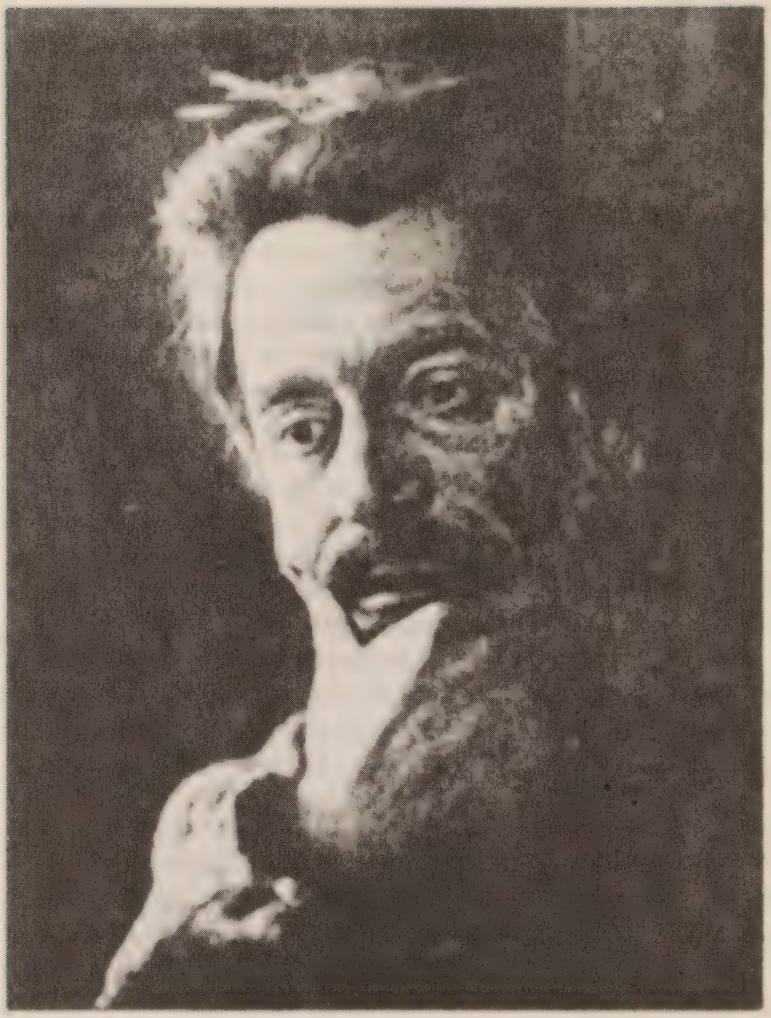
THIRTEEN ANARCHISTS, held for no plausible reason in the Taganka prison in Moscow, inaugurated a hunger strike in July, 1921, demanding either to be arraigned or set free. This action happened to coincide with the gathering of the International Congress of Red Trade Unions (the *Profintern*) in the capital city. A group of foreign Syndicalist delegates (mainly French) questioned the "Soviet" government about the strike, having learned of it, with full details, from the prisoners' relatives. The questioning also bore on other analagous cases, and even on the Bolshevik policy of repressing Anarchists and Syndicalists.

In the name of the Government, Leon Trotsky cynically answered: "We do not imprison the real Anarchists. Those whom we hold in prison are not Anarchists, but criminals and bandits who cover themselves by claiming to be Anarchists."

Well informed, the delegates did not give up. They carried their interrogations to the tribune of the Congress, demanding at least the setting free of the Anarchists confined in the Taganka bastile. That questioning caused a great scandal at the Congress, and forced the Government to give ground—for it feared more serious revelations. It promised to free the thirteeen Taganka prisoners. The strike ended on the eleventh day.

After the departure of the delegates, and after letting the affair drag out for two months, during which it sought an adequate pretext for accusing the prisoners, still behind the bars of Taganka, of serious crime, and thereby get out of keeping its promise, the Government finally felt compelled to release the thirteen in September. And immediately it expelled all but three from the U.S.S.R.

In revenge (vengeance was a constant element in the Bolshevik repression), and especially to justify, before the foreign workers and their delegates, its terrorist procedures against "the so-called liber-



Lev Chernyi (Leon Tchorny).

tarians", the Lenin régime staged, a little later, a brazen frame-up against [some of the same group].

For purported "criminal" acts, and particularly for the alleged counterfeiting of Soviet bank notes, its agents shot, (naturally in secret, in the night, in one of the cellars of the *Cheka,* without the shadow of any judicial procedure) several of the most honest, sincere, and devoted Anarchists: the young Fanny Baron (whose husband was in prison), the well-known militant Leon Tchorny (whose real name was Tourtchaninoff), and others.

It was proven afterward that the libertarians who were shot had nothing to do with the specified "crimes". And it was proven also that the counterfeiting was done by the *Cheka* itself. Two of its agents, one named Steiner (but called Kamenny) and a Chekist chauffeur were introduced into libertarian circles, and at the same time into certain criminal hang-outs, in order to be able to show "connections" between the two and build up a case against the chosen victims. The indispensable appearances established, the "case" was formulated, and made public.

Thus, to justify its other crimes, with the aid of a new one, the Bolshevik government sacrificed several more Anarchists and tried to sully their memory.

Fanya and Aaron Baron.

CHAPTER 5
The Case of Lefevre, Vergeat and Lepetit

Three French militants vanished without trace in another outstanding case. They were: Raymond Lefevre, Vergeat, and Lepetit, delegates to the Congress of the Communist International which took place in Moscow in the summer of 1920.

Raymond Lefevre, though a member of the Communist Party, repeatedly voiced gloomy sentiments at that time, and was fully aware of the false route his ideological comrades had taken. And Vergeat and Lepetit, both Anarcho-Syndicalists, openly displayed their anger, and did not conceal their criticism of the state of things in Russia. More than once, Lepetit, his head in his hands, said, while weighing the report he would have to make to his French Syndicalist comrades: "But what do I want to say to them?"

The Congress over, the three worked for several days and nights getting their notes and documents together. Then, repressive measures against them began when, on the eve of their return to France, they refused to hand over their *dossiers* to the functionaries of the Soviet power, who claimed to be in charge of carrying the documents to their destination. Lefevre even refused to trust his notes and papers to the Russian members of his party.

So the Moscovite politicians decided to sabotage the departure of the trio. Under false pretexts, they were not permitted to take the route which Cachin and the other Communist delegates followed, but for mysterious reasons the Soviet government arranged to "have them leave by way of the North".

Anxious to protect their mission, and believing themselves sufficiently protected by the presence of the Communist Lefevre, who was going to make the trip with them, Vergeat and Lepetit planned to go back to France in time to take part in a confederal Congress, at which they were supposed to present their reports.

Their Calvary began with a long and difficult trip from

Moscow to Murmansk (Russia's extreme Northern port, on the Arctic Ocean), which was made under cruel conditions. "They are sabotaging us," Lepetit said with reason. On the train, troubled by the intense cold, and without warm clothing or food, they approached the Chekists who accompanied the convoy, asking them for what they absolutely needed. In vain they referred to their capacity as delegates, receiving this reply: "We are completely unaware that there are delegates on the train. We have received no orders on the subject."

It was only at the repeated insistence of Lefevre that they were given some food. Thus, suffering from many privations and expecting worse difficulties, they arrived in Murmansk. There they took refuge among friendly fishermen and awaited the fulfilment of the promise made in Moscow, the coming of a boat which would take them to Sweden.

Three weeks thus passed for them in restlessness and astonishment at not seeing the promised boat arrive. And they began to doubt the possibility of their reaching France in time to complete their mission.

Then Lefevre wrote a letter to a friend in Moscow. Not receiving a reply, he sent a second, and a third, all without result. Later it was learned that the three letters were intercepted and sent to Trotsky, who confiscated them. In the third one Lefevre gave a poignant description of their plight and announced their desperate determination to cross the Arctic Ocean in a fishing boat to get out of the land of the Soviets. "We are going to our death," he wrote.

They got together enough money to buy a boat. And despite the pleading of several companions and of fishermen on the coast, they embarked and went—[beyond doubt] to their death, as Raymond Lefevre had said. For they were never seen again.

Definite proof of this assassination coldly arranged by Moscow does not exist—or the persons who possess it keep it secret, for reasons easy to understand. Naturally the Bolsheviks deny it. But can one doubt it when one knows the firm and intransigent attitude of Vergeat and Lepetit while in Russia, the usual procedure of the Bolshevik government, the handicaps placed on their departure? And it must be remembered that Cachin and the other Communist delegates from France were able to make the

return journey without difficulty and arrived in time to repeat to the Congress in Tours the lessons they had learned in Moscow.

In any event, we have related faithfully the authentic facts of that episode which eventually became known in Russia. We believe that they speak eloquently enough for themselves. The reader can judge.

CHAPTER 6
A Personal Experience

LET ME tell here of an experience of my own, of a less tragic nature, but one which throws light on certain Bolshevik procedures worthy of being written up among the high exploits of State Communism. At the time of which I speak, this happening was far from unique in Russia. But since then it could not be repeated in a country wholly subjugated by its new masters.

In November, 1918, I arrived in the city of Kursk, in the Ukraine, to attend a congress of Ukrainian libertarians. In those days, such an assemblage was still possible in Ukrainia, in view of the special conditions in that region, then struggling against both the reaction and the German invasion. The Bolsheviki *tolerated* the Anarchists there, while utilizing and supervising them.

From the beginning of the Revolution, the laboring population in Kursk never had heard a lecture on Anarchism, the small local group not having the necessary strength, so that the few libertarian speakers went elsewhere. Taking advantage of my presence, the group proposed that I give a lecture on that subject, in a large hall. Naturally I accepted with joy.

It was necessary to ask for permission from the president of the local Soviet. He, an honest ex-worker, gave it to us readily. The precious document in hand, the hall was engaged two weeks in advance, and impressive posters were ordered a few days later and placed on walls. Everything was ready.

The lecture promised to be a great success for our ideas. Certain indications—talk around the city, crowds reading the posters, requests for information to the local group—left no doubt about the matter. Evidently the hall would be packed. Unaccustomed to such a response (for in Great Russia, by that time, no public lectures on Anarchism were possible) we felt a legitimate satisfaction.

Then, two days before the appointed date, the secretary of the sponsoring group came to see me, worried and indignant. He had just received a note from the president of the Bolshevik Committee of Kursk (the real power there). informing him that "because of the holiday" the Anarchist lecture could not take place, and that he had so notified the custodian of the hall, which was now reserved by the Communist committee for a popular dancing party.

I hurried to the office of that committee, and had a stormy session with its president—whose name, if I recall correctly, was Rynditch (or it may have been Ryndin).

"What *is* this?" I demanded. "You, a Communist, do not recognize the rules of priority? We obtained the authorization of the Kursk Soviet and engaged the hall two weeks in advance, precisely to be certain of having it. The committee must await its turn."

"I'm sorry, Comrade," he answered, "but the decision of the Committee, which is, don't forget, the supreme power in Kursk, and as such may have reasons of which you are ignorant and which supersede everything else, is irrevocable. Neither the president of the Soviet nor the custodian of the hall could have known in advance that the Committee was going to need the hall on that date. It is absolutely useless to discuss the matter, or to insist. I repeat, it is irrevocable. The lecture will not take place. Either hold it in another hall or on another date."

"You know very well," I said, "that it is not possible to arrange all that in two days. And then, there are no other halls large enough. Moreover, all the halls must already be taken for holiday parties. The lecture is out, that is all."

"I'm sorry. Postpone it to another date. You will lose nothing. It can be arranged."

"That would not be the same thing at all," I contended. "Alterations like this always injure the cause greatly. Then, too, the posters were expensive. Furthermore, I have to leave Kursk quickly. But tell me—how are you going to manage on the evening scheduled for the lecture? It is my opinion that you are going to expose yourself to the resistance of the public, who certainly will come in large numbers to hear the lecture. The posters have been up for two weeks. The workers of Kursk and the surrounding

country are awaiting it impatiently. It is too late to have notices of the change printed and posted. You will have difficulty imposing a dancing party on that crowd instead of the lecture which they will have come to hear."

"That's our affair. Don't do anything. We will take full charge of it."

"Therefore, fundamentally," I pointed out, "the lecture is forbidden by your committee despite the authorization by the Soviet."

"Oh, no, Comrade. We don't forbid it at all. Set it for a date after the holidays. We will inform the people who come to hear the lecture. That's all."

On this note we parted. I conferred with the local group and we decided to postpone the lecture until January 5, 1919. Accordingly we notified the Bolshevik Committee and the hall custodian. This change compelled me to delay my intended departure for Kharkov several days.

New posters were ordered. Beyond that, we decided, first, to let the Bolshevik authorities placate the public; and second, that I should remain in my hotel room that evening. For we surmised that a large crowd would demand, in spite of everything, that the lecture be given, and that finally, the Bolsheviki would feel obliged to yield. It was therefore necessary that the secretary of the group could summon me in case of need. Personally, I expected a great scandal, perhaps even a serious fracas.

The lecture had been scheduled for eight in the evening. Toward 8.30 I was called on the telephone. I heard the excited voice of the secretary say: "Comrade, the hall is literally besieged by a crowd which will listen to no explanations, and is demanding the lecture. The Bolsheviks are powerless to reason with them. Probably they will have to yield and the lecture will take place. Take a cab and come quickly."

A cab was at hand, and the trip was made speedily. From a distance I heard an extraordinary clamor in the street. Arriving at the scene, I saw a throng standing around the hall and cursing: "To the Devil with the dancing party! Enough of dancing parties! We are fed up with them. We want the lecture. We came for the lecture . . . Lecture! . . . Lecture . . . Lec-ture!"

The secretary, watching, hurried to meet me. With difficulty

we pushed through the mass. The hall was being mobbed. At the top of the stairs I found "Comrade" Rynditch haranguing the crowd, which continually shouted: "Lecture! Lecture!"

"You did well to come," the Bolshevik committee head threw at me, angrily. "You see what is happening. This is your work."

Indignantly I said: "I warned you. You are responsible for all this. You took charge of arranging things. Well, go ahead! Fix things the way you want them. The best and simplest move would be to permit the lecture."

"No, no, no!" he shouted furiously. "Your lecture shall not take place, I guarantee."

I shrugged my shoulders.

Suddenly Rynditch said to me: "Look, Comrade: They won't listen to me. And I don't want to have to use force. You can arrange things. They'll listen to you. Explain the situation to them and persuade them to go away peacefully. Make them listen to reason. Tell them that your lecture has been postponed. It is your duty to do what I ask."

I felt that if the lecture did not take place then, it would never take place. Also I was sure that it was definitely forbidden, and that quite likely I would be arrested.

Unequivocally I refused to speak to the people who jammed the stairway. With a shake of my head, I told the committee head: "No, I will not speak. You wanted this. Get out of it yourself."

The crowd, aware of our dispute, cursed more loudly. Rynditch tried to yell something. Wasted effort. His voice was drowned in a tempest of shouting. The crowd felt itself strong. It was having a good time, closing ranks, packing the staircases even more tightly if that were possible, and the landing, and the foyer in front of the hall's closed doors.

Now Rynditch made desperate guestures and again appealed to me. "Speak to them, speak to them, or it will end badly."

An idea came to me. I signaled for silence to the people who surrounded us. Instantly they quieted down. Then, sedately, spacing my words, I said:

"Comrades, the responsibility for this highly regrettable confusion belongs to the Bolshevik Committee of Kursk. We engaged the hall first for the lecture, two weeks in advance. Two days ago

the committee, without even consulting us, took possession of the hall to hold a dance tonight. (Here the crowd demanded at the top of their lungs: "Down with the dance! Let's have the lecture!") That compelled us to postpone our lecture to a later date.

"However, I am the speaker and I am prepared to give the lecture right away. The Bolsheviks have formally forbidden it this evening. But you are the citizens of Kursk; you are the public. It is up to you to decide. I am entirely at your disposal. Choose, Comrades—either we postpone the lecture and go away peacefully and come back on January fifth, or if you want the lecture right now, if you are really determined, act, take possession of the hall."

Hardly had I spoken these last words when the crowd applauded joyfully and yelled: "Lecture, right away! Lecture! Lecture!"

And with irresistible force it pushed toward the hall. Rynditch was overwhelmed. The doors were opened. If not, they would have been forced. And the lights went on inside.

In a few moments the hall was filled. The audience, partly sitting, partly standing, calmed down. I had only to begin. But Rynditch climbed onto the platform. He addressed the audience: "Citizens, Comrades! Be patient for a few more minutes. The Bolshevik Committee is going to confer and make a final decision. They will communicate this to you directly. Probably the dance will not take place."

"Hurrah!" the crowd shouted, carried away with joy over its apparent victory. "Lecture! Long live the lecture!"

They applauded again, happily.

Now the Bolshevik Committee retired to a nearby room to confer. Meanwhile the doors of the hall were closed, the audience patiently awaiting the decision. We supposed that this little comedy was being played by the Bolsheviki to save face.

A quarter of an hour passed.

Then, abruptly, the hall doors were opened, and a strong detachment of Chekist soldiers (special troops, a sort of State police, blindly devoted to the Lenin régime), rifles in hand, entered. Everyone in the audience, stunned, remained frozen in their places. Quickly, in an impressive silence, the soldiers poured into the hall, sliding along the walls, and behind the seats. One group remained near the entrance, with its rifles pointed at the audience.

(Afterwards it was learned that the Bolshevik Committee had first called upon the city barracks, asking that a regular regiment intervene. But the soldiers wanted explanations—at that stage this was still possible—declared that they, too, would like to hear the lecture, and refused to come. It was then that the committee summoned the Chekist detachment, which had been ready for all eventualities).

Directly the committee members reappeared in the hall. Rynditch announced their ruling from the platform in a triumphant voice.

"The decision of the committee has been made. The dance will not take place. Nor will the lecture. In any case, it is too late for either. I call upon this audience to leave the hall and the building with absolute calm and in perfect order. If not, the Chekists will intervene."

Indignant, but powerless, the people began to get up and leave the hall. "Even so," some muttered, "their party was spoiled . . . That wasn't bad."

Outside, a new surprise awaited them. At the exit, two armed Chekists searched each person and inspected his identity card. Several were arrested. Some were released next day. But others remained in jail.

I returned to the hotel.

Next morning the telephone rang. Rynditch's voice: "Comrade Voline, come to see me at the committee's office. I want to speak to you about your lecture."

"The date is set for January fifth," I said. "The notices have been ordered. Have you any objection?"

"No, but come anyhow. I must talk with you."

When I got there [Rynditch was not in sight. Instead] I was received by a Bolshevik, amiable and smiling, who said: "Look, Comrade: *The committee has decided that your lecture shall not take place.* You yourself are responsible for this decision, because your attitude yesterday was arrogant and hostile. Also, the committee has decided that you cannot remain in Kursk. For the moment, you will remain here, in our quarters."

"Ah, am I arrested then?"

"Oh no, Comrade. You are not arrested. You will only be kept here for a few hours, until the train leaves for Moscow."

"For Moscow?" I shouted. "But I have absolutely nothing to do in Moscow. And I already have a ticket for Kharkov,[1] where I am supposed to go after the Congress here. I have friends and work to do there."

After a short discussion on this point, the Bolshevik said: "That's all right. You can go to Kharkov. But the train doesn't leave until 1 a.m. You'll have to stay here all day."

"Can I go to the hotel and settle my bill and get my valise?"

"No, Comrade. We cannot permit that."

"I promise to go directly to the hotel . . . And moreover, someone can accompany me."

"It is impossible, Comrade, we regret. You can see that. The matter might get noised around. We don't want that. The order is formal. Give instructions to one of our comrades. He will go to the hotel and fetch your valise."

An armed Chekist guard already was stationed in front of my room door. I could do nothing.

A "comrade" brought the valise. Toward midnight another took me in a cab to the railway station and waited until I actually departed.

This unexpected journey was made under such painful circumstances that I fell sick *en route*. I was able to avoid pneumonia only because of the kindness of a fellow-passenger who put me up with friends in Soumy, a small Ukrainian city. There a competent doctor took good care of me. And a few days later I was in Kharkov.

On arrival, I wrote for our local weekly, *Nabat*—forbidden a little later by the Bolshevik authorities because of its growing success—an article entitled *Story of a Lecture Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. In it I related in detail that whole unsavory adventure.

[1] **Kharkov is about 150 miles South of Kursk, while Moscow is some 300 miles North of the latter city.**

CHAPTER 7
The Final Settlement

AFTER ALL that we have said about the nature of State Socialism and its inevitable evolution, the reader will easily understand the reasons which led this "Socialism" into a relentless conflict with the libertarian idea.

For an informed person there is of course nothing surprising or unexpected in the fact that the Socialist power in Russia persecuted Anarchism and Anarchists. This was foreseen by the Anarchists themselves (and as early as Mikhail Bakunin) long before the Russian Revolution, in the event that the latter should become statist and authoritarian.

Repression of the libertarian concept, persecution of its followers, and suppression of the independent movements of the masses: such are the inevitable consequences of the opposition between *the true Revolution* advancing and *the statist principle*, which, momentarily triumphant, does not accept this advance, does not understand the true Revolution, and opposes it.

The new government (if a given revolution has the misfortune to have one), whether it calls itself "revolutionary", "democratic" "Socialist", "proletarian", "Workers' and Peasants' ", "Leninist", "Trotskyist", or whatever, is bound to resist the living forces of the true Revolution. This antagonism leads the power, with the same inevitability, to a more and more ruthless struggle, which it must justify with increasing hypocrisy, against the revolutionary forces, and, by this very fact, against the Anarchists, the staunchest spokesmen, supporters, and defenders of the true Revolution and its aspirations.

The triumph of Power in this struggle means, inevitably, the defeat of the Social Revolution, and therefore "automatically" the suppression of the Anarchists. So long as the Revolution and the Anarchist resist, the Socialist authority oppresses them, with

mounting effrontery and violence. Monstrous deception and unlimited terror: such are its final arguments, such is the apotheosis of its desperate defense. Then all that is really revolutionary ends by being pitilessly swept away by the so-called "revolutionary" imposture, as being contrary to "the supreme interests of the Revolution" (O cruel irony!), as "criminal", and as "traitorous".

That was what could have been foreseen [in Russia],—in the event that the statist idea triumphed—and what was foreseen by some.

And that is what millions of people will eventually have to understand if they are to avert [a recurrence of] the failure, the bankruptcy, and the disaster of the Russian Revolution in the next revolution.

At present, as in the time of the Tsars, no libertarian movement, press, or propaganda exists in Russia, and for a long time none has existed. Anarchism is outside the law. The Anarchists there have been exterminated, [isolated, or run out] *to the last man* by all possible and imaginable methods. There are still some, scattered in the prisons and places of exile. But death has wreaked such ravages among them that very few remain alive.

A small number of Russian Anarchists who escaped the killings, banished from their native land or having fled, are in different countries in Western Europe and in the Americas. And if there still are conscious partisans of the libertarian idea in Russia, they are obliged to keep their thoughts to themselves.

The Committee to Aid Imprisoned and Exiled Anarchists in Russia, which functioned for long years in Germany, France, and the United States, collecting funds to send to the victims and publishing information bulletins on the repression, has been compelled to cease all activity, because relations with the few victims still alive have become impossible.

The epic of the extermination of the libertarian movement in Russia, which took place the day after [sic] the "Communist" revolution, is finished. Now it is history, [to which these pages are a contribution].

Most terrible among the aspects of this unique repression is that during it, along with the real Anarchists [who suffered extinction], hundreds of thousands of simple toilers—industrial workers, peasants, and intellectuals—who rose up against the Bolshevik im-

posture, were likewise annihilated, and *the revolutionary idea itself, and indeed all free thought and action also became "history"* in the land of nascent "Socialism".

CHAPTER 8
The Extinguisher

How is it that this frightful "history" is not known abroad? The reader will learn.

From the beginning, and through the years, the Bolshevik government did its utmost to conceal its hideous deeds from the workers and revolutionaries of other countries, by systematically and brazenly deceiving them, employing the classical methods of silence, lying, and slander.

Its fundamental procedure has been that of all impostors in all times: after extinguishing an idea and a movement, to extinguish their history as well. The "Soviet" press never has spoken of the struggles that Bolshevism had to wage against the liberty of the Russian people nor the means to which it had to have recourse to win. Nowhere in "Soviet" literature will the reader find the story of these facts. And when the authors of such literature cannot avoid speaking of them, they confine themselves to mentioning, in a few lines, that it was a matter of suppressing counter-revolutionary movements or the exploits of bandits. *Therefore, who is going to verify the facts?*

Another element that has been of great aid to the "Communist" régime in Moscow in the distortion of history is the effective closing of the frontiers. The events of the Russian Revolution unfolded, and are still unfolding, in an enclosed vessel. It has been difficult all along, if not impossible [for anyone not on the actual scene] to know what was happening. The press of the country, wholly governmental, was quiet about everything that had to do with the repression.

When, in the advanced circles of Europe, the question of the persecution of the Anarchists in Russia was raised, a few details of the truth having leaked out despite all restrictive measures, the Bolshevik government declared each time, through the mouths of its representatives and with exceptional aplomb, "What do you

mean? The real Anarchists have full freedom in the U.S.S.R. to affirm and propagate their ideas. They even have their clubs and their press." And since no one was very much interested in the Anarchists and their conceptions, that reply sufficed. It would have required inquiry after inquiry to prove the contrary. *And who thought of doing that?*

Some renegades from Anarchism, patronized by the Bolshevik government, lent it valuable assistance. By way of proof, the régime cited the false statements of these ex-libertarians. Having repudiated their past and seeking to regain their virginity, they confirmed and testified to everything that was wanted of them.

The Bolsheviki liked also to quote the "tame" [renegades] called "Soviet Anarchists". These believed it wise and useful to adapt themselves to the situation and to Bolshevism—"in order to be able to do something" prudently, secretly, behind the façade of "loyalty". This "tactic of protective colorations", however, could not succeed with the Bolsheviks, themselves familiar with all the techniques of anti-governmental struggle. Closely supervising these "camouflaged" Anarchists, shadowing them constantly, threatening them, and "taming" them adroitly, the authorities ended by using them to justify and even to approve—"momentarily"—all the proceedings of Bolshevism. The recalcitrants were imprisoned or deported. And as for those who truly submitted, they were put on show as "real" Anarchists, who "understand Bolshevism", in contrast to all the others, who were pictured as "false" Anarchists.

Or the Bolsheviks spoke [with seeming friendliness] of certain Anarchists who remained nearly inactive and who never touched on "sensitive" points. To create an illusion, they were permitted to retain some insignificant organizations, closely supervised. Some of them were authorized to reprint old inoffensive Anarchist works, historical or theoretical. And these "Anarchist publishing houses" were cited to demonstrate that the "real Anarchists" were not touched. Later all such "organizations" likewise were "liquidated".

Finally, a few extravagant "Anarchist" clowns who distorted Anarchism to the point of caricature were tolerated. The Bolshevik writers did not fail to cite them in order to ridicule the libertarian idea.

Thus the Lenin régime created a façade enabling it to conceal the truth from the Russian masses and from poorly informed people abroad. Subsequently, having made sure of the indifference, the naiveté, and the slackness of "advanced" circles in other countries, the Bolsheviki didn't even bother to hide the truth. For the "advanced people" and the Russian masses would swallow anything!

This deceptive façade also permitted the Bolsheviks to make use of a weapon which, alas, is always effective: *slander.* On the one hand, they deliberately confused the Anarchists with "counter-revolutionaries", "criminals", and "bandits" On the other hand, they maintained that in the midst of the Revolution the Anarchists could only babble, criticize, "fart around", put spokes in the wheels of the Revolution, destroy, provoke disorder, and pursue their own selfish interests. [These detractors] pretended that even when the Anarchists wanted to serve the Revolution, they were incapable of achieving anything correctly; that they had "no positive program"; that they never proposed anything concrete; that they were irresponsible dreamers, who didn't know themselves what they wanted; and that, for all these reasons, the "Soviet" régime was obliged to suppress them; such elements, it held, presented a grave danger in the course of a difficult revolution.

Because no one except those involved knew the truth, and no one else was in a position to examine the facts, this tactic succeeded. It served the Bolshevik government marvelously through the years, and was part of a whole system of deception in which the Bolsheviki were past masters.

All the revelations about their ruthlessness, more and more numerous and precise, in the libertarian press or elsewhere abroad, were methodically and cynically refuted with the same stereotyped arguments. The mass of the workers, the advance-guard intellectuals of all countries, dazzled by the false renown of "the first Socialist republic", accepted all the nonsense of its "genial leaders", and, letting themselves thus be royally "rolled", cared very little about the revelations of the Anarchists. Vanity, fashion, snobbery, and other secondary factors played their parts in this general indifference.

Finally, the most prosaic personal interests also contributed

[to the sweeping imposture]. Among others, how many famous writers, in all countries, deliberately closed their eyes to the truth that they know perfectly well. The "Soviet" government had need of their names for publicity purposes. In return, it assured an advantageous market for their works, perhaps the only one. And those poor men carried out this tacit bargain, salving their consciences with the excuses and justifications inspired by their new patrons.

CHAPTER 9
The Deception of Visiting Delegations

HERE WE must devote some paragraphs to a special procedure of "skull-stuffing" utilized by the "Soviets" on a vast scale—the systematic deception of foreign workers' delegations.

The facts are clearly known. One of the "clinching arguments" of the Bolsheviks to disprove unfavorable revelations about their administration of the affairs of Russia and its satellites, consists in calling upon the testimony of delegations sent to the U.S.S.R. by organizations, factories, or institutions of various other countries. After a stay of a few weeks in "the land of Socialism" such delegates, almost without exception, have called everything that was said abroad to the discredit of the "Soviet" régime "lies and slanders".

In the beginning the "trick of the delegations" was infallible. Later it lost its efficacy. For some time now it has been almost abandoned. On the one hand, events rushed on and this little game was by-passed. On the other hand, it was finally widely realized in the outside world that under the conditions surrounding their visits, the delegations visiting the "Soviet" Union could not discover the truth at all [about what was happening in that domain], even if they were sincere and impartial.

A strict and fast-moving program, formulated in advance and well regulated, was imposed on them from the moment of their arrival. Knowing neither the language, nor the customs, nor the real life of the population, they were "assisted", which actually meant *manipulated,* by the governmental guides and interpreters. They were shown what the "Communist" government wanted them to see, and were told what it wanted them to believe. And the visitors had no means of approaching the population to study its way of living objectively and exhaustively.

All that is now more or less accepted [by workers' organizations and interested individuals in the democratic countries].

But it is pertinent to record here another fact apropos of that situation which still remains unknown to the public and which says a great deal about the state of things in the U.S.S.R.

The Committee to Aid Imprisoned and Exiled Anarchists in Russia, some Syndicalist organizations, and some well-known militant individuals, among them the late lamented Erich Muhsam of Germany and Sebastien Faure of France, repeatedly proposed to the Bolshevik government that it allow *a real delegation* to enter Russia—a delegation constituted in complete independence and composed of militants of differing tendencies, including "Communists".

With that proposal its sponsors submitted the following conditions to the "Soviet" government: 1. Free and unlimited stay, until the delegation itself considers its mission completed; 2. Freedom [and facilities], to go anywhere that the delegation may deem indispensable to the interests of its mission, including prisons, places of exile, et cetera; 3. The right to publish the facts, impressions, and conclusions of the delegation in the advance-guard press abroad; 4. An interpreter chosen by the delegation itself.

Obviously it would have been entirely to the interest of the Bolshevik régime to accept such a proposal—if it was sincere, if it had nothing to hide, if it was not concealing unadmissible truths. A favourable report on the "Soviet" Russian scene by such a delegation would have put an end to all equivocation. Any [real] Socialist government, any "Workers' and Peasants' government" (supposing for the moment that such could exist) would have received that kind of delegation with open arms. It even would have wished for it, suggested, requested it. The testimony and approval of a delegation making its observations under the indicated circumstances would have been decisive, irresistible, irrefutable.

But that offer was never accepted. The "Soviet" government turned a deaf ear to it every time.

The reader should reflect well upon this fact. For *the disapproval of such a delegation also would have been irresistible and definitive.* The results of the proposed inquiry would have

been catastrophic for the good name of the "Soviet" régime, for its whole system, for its whole cause.

But no one abroad budged. The grave-diggers of the Revolution could sleep quite soundly and ignore the attempts to make them admit the terrible truth: the failure of the Revolution as an outcome of their methods. The blind and the bought of all countries marched with them.

Revealing the truth [about these things]—unknown, we are sure, to almost all of our non-Anarchist readers—we are fulfilling an imperative duty. Not only because the truth must some day appear in all its effulgence, but also—and especially—because this truth will render an inestimable service to everyone who wants to be informed, who is sick of being eternally the dupe of criminal impostors, and who, finally, strengthened by the truth, can act in the future with full knowledge of the situation.

The story of the repression in the U.S.S.R. is not only suggestive and revealing in itself; it is still an excellent means of making known *the fundamentals, the concealed "underside", the true nature of authoritarian Communism.*

In this respect, we have only one regret—that of being able to tell this story only in an incomplete way.

Let us cite one more recent example, which illustrates effectively the manner in which the Bolsheviki and their servitors deceive everyone.

This pertains to a work by a certain Emilian Yaroslavsky, a notorious Bolshevik: a book entitled *History of Anarchism in Russia*, which appeared in 1937, in Spanish and in French, for the purpose of counteracting the eventual success of the libertarian idea in Spain and elsewhere

We brush aside the fantastic "information" on the origins of Anarchism, on Bakunin, on Anarchism in Russia before 1917, and on the attitude of the Anarchists toward the war that began in Europe in 1914. A reply to these myths perhaps will appear one day in the specifically Anarchist press. What interests us particularly here are the descriptions, in that volume, of *the libertarian movement in the course of the Revolution of* 1917.

Yaroslavsky takes care not to speak of *the real Anarchist movement.* He tarries long over fringe movements which had

nothing to do with Anarchism. He is much concerned with Anarchist groups, publications, and activities of secondary importance. Carefully he notes the weak points and malignantly shows the deficiencies in order to feed his bad faith. And he lingers especially with the "remnants" of the movement: with those unfortunate "remains" which, after the liquidation of the *bona fide* libertarian organizations, desperately and vainly knocked themselves out in their efforts to maintain some appearance of action.

Those remnants were the lamentable and impotent waste of the former Anarchist movement that had been extinguished. Henceforth they could not do anything serious or positive. Their semi-clandestine "activity", supervised and impeded, was not at all characteristic of the libertarian movement in Russia. And in all countries, and in all periods, these left-over pieces of organizations which had been destroyed by the force of the State, subsequently dragged out a sterile and pointless existence until they were completely exhausted. Deviations, inconsequentialities, splits, inevitably occupied their whole semblances of life, for which of course they can hardly be reproached, since all possibility of healthy activity had been taken away from them.

It is about this debris that Yaroslavsky tells us, while pretending to speak of the real Anarchist movement. He mentions the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union of Petrograd and its journal, *Golos Truda,* only once, in passing, and then only because he finds something about it to falsify. He speaks neither of the Moscow Federation nor of the periodical *Anarchy.* And when he devotes a few lines to the Ukrainian *Nabat,* it is also to distort the facts.

If this author had been honest, he would have dwelt primarily on those three organizations and quoted their press. But he knows very well that such impartiality would ruin his assertions, and thus be contrary to the whole purpose of this work. And he omits everything which incontestably would prove the serious basis, positive meaning, and influence of the Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist movement in Russia during the 1917 Revolution.

Yaroslavsky does not breathe a word about the persecutions, the repression, the violent suppression of that movement. For if he told the truth about those onslaughts it would wreck his lying thesis. According to him, the Anarchists, in 1917, were "against the Socialist and proletarian Revolution". His contention is that

the libertarian movement extinguished itself, by reason of its unpopularity and its impotence.

The reader knows that this version is exactly the opposite of the truth. It was precisely because that movement evolved and grew quickly in Russia, winning support and widening its influence, that the Bolsheviks hastened to stamp it out in the seed, by means of the most commonplace violence, by the brutal intervention of their soldiers and police.

But if Yaroslavsky admitted the truth, he would upset the whole structure of his book. So he lies, confident of the ignorance of his readers, and of the absence of any contradiction.

If I have permitted myself to linger over this example, it is because that manner of presenting things is typical of "Soviet" propaganda. All the Bolsheviks' workers on Anarchism in Russia proceed exactly in the same way and are as alike as drops of water. The order comes from above. The Bolshevik "historians" and "writers" have only to follow it. It is necessary to destroy the libertarian idea at all costs. It is a work done to order and well paid. It has nothing to do with the historical truth which we are now in the process of revealing.

CHAPTER 10
Bolshevik "Justice"

IT REMAINS for us to cast a quick glance at the administrative and judiciary procedures of the Bolshevik régime during that period.

Moreover, these procedures, essentially, have hardly changed at all. If, in our days, they are less frequently employed, it is because all those who were subjected to them in the past have been exterminated. But still, fairly recently, the same principles and measures have been applied to the "Trotskyists", to the anti-Stalinist old Bolsheviks, to functionaries fallen into disgrace: officers, policemen, and others.

As we have stated, there exists in Russia a political police system which works in secret, which has the right to arrest people secretly, without any formal arraignment, to try them secretly without witnesses or lawyers, to condemn them secretly to various penalties, including death, or to renew their detention or exile for as long as it may see fit.

This is a cardinal point. The hateful regimen applied to prisoners and exiles—we will insist upon this statement despite all the denials by foreign "delegates" deceived or bought—is only an aggravated circumstance. Even if the life in the Russian prisons had the humanitarian character ascribed to it by the officials and their acolytes, it would not be any less true that honest workers could be arbitrarily removed [from their homes or jobs], thrown into prison, and deprived of the right to struggle for their cause, simply on the simple decision of some functionaries.

During the period with which we are especially concerned, that omnipotent police force was called the *Cheka*, an abbreviation of its complete Russian name: *Chrezvytchainaya Kommissia*, Extraordinary Commission. The *Cheka* was established at the end of 1917, on Lenin's initiative, by a nucleus of Communist militants who had proven themselves in the struggle against Tsarism and

enjoyed the unlimited confidence of the central committee of the Russian Communist Party.

At that time the Communists justified the existence of this institution and the special features of its functioning by [pointing to] the necessity of acting swiftly against the numerous plots [so they alleged] threatening the Revolution. Later this argument lost its value. The Cheka could no longer use it. For a new problem had to be dealt with—that of defending the Power against the Revolution.

In 1923 the change of the secret police force's title to that of G.P.U., also an abbreviation, altered only a few aspects of its practices. And subsequently nothing was changed, except the individuals at the top. The names of three are fairly well known abroad—Djerzinsky, creator and animator of the *Cheka,* who died suddenly, or who, according to some, was executed while on duty by order of Stalin; Yagoda, executed as a result of a famous "trial"; and Yejov, his successor, who mysteriously disappeared.

The *Cheka* never issued reports on its activities, neither to the workers at large, nor to their "representatives". Those activities were always pursued with the greatest mystery. Information was supplied to the *Cheka* by a vast network of secret agents, of which a sizeable part was recruited from the former Tsarist police. And the *Cheka* also took advantage of the duty imposed on all Communists to help the "revolutionary" police by giving information, denunciations, et cetera.

The despotism, the abuses, the crimes perpetrated in the dungeons of the *Cheka* surpasses all imagination. We cannot take time to enumerate them here; this particular subject deserves a volume by itself. The future historian will be horrified when the archives are opened and give forth their terrible human documentation. Readers will find edifying examples in certain available books.

In that period, tribunals and public trials for political cases did not exist. Even today such trials are exceptional. Then the *Cheka* conducted them exclusively.

As a rule, arrests were without appeal. And [at first] the sentences were not published. Later, occasionally, in a few lines, limited mention of oral trials before the police was made in the press. These references showed only that a case had been put

on the calendar and that a given sentence was imposed. Reasons for the sentence were never stated.

Sentences were carried out by the *Cheka* itself. If the verdict was death, the prisoner was taken from his cell, and usually executed by a revolver bullet in the back of the neck at the moment when, followed by a *Chekist* executioner, he was descending the last step of a staircase leading to the cellar. Then the body was buried secretly. It was never returned to the prisoner's relatives. Frequently the latter heard of the execution of their kin only indirectly —by the refusal of the prison administration to receive food that they brought for him. The classic phrase was of gem-like simplicity: "So-and-so no longer appears on the prison records." This could mean transfer to another prison or exile. If it was death, the formula was the same. No other explanation was permitted. It was up to the relatives to make enquiries elsewhere to learn exactly what had happened.

Exile always administrative, meant deportation to the most distant and barren parts of the vast country: either to the warm and marshy regions, extremely unhealthy, in Turkestan, or to the extreme North, in the terrible regions of Narym or Turukhansk. Often enough the Government "amused itself" by sending exiles first to Turkestan and then suddenly transferring them to the far North, or *vice versa.* It was an indirect but certain way of sending them into the other world.

The correspondence between the Aid Committee and the libertarians exiled to the North revealed the physical and moral horror of the "life" of these victims. Arriving at their destination, they were henceforth isolated from the world. Such destinations, in several instances, were forgotten towns and villages whose inhabitants lived by hunting or fishing. *Mail came only once or twice a year.* Hundreds of these settlements comprised only four or five huts lost in a desert of ice and snow.

Those exiles suffered all the illnesses of malnutrition, cold, and inactivity—scurvy, tuberculosis, heart and stomach diseases. Life was a slow torture and death came as a deliverance.

The prisons where the libertarians, the Syndicalists, the "oppositionists", the simple workers, peasants, or other citizens who had rebelled or were merely suspects, were confined, were never visited by the foreign delegations. Such visiting groups usually were con-

ducted through Sokolniki, Lefortovo, and certain sections of Butyrki—that is, they were taken to the Moscow prisons where the counter-revolutionaries, speculators, and common-law prisoners were kept. Sometimes these were persuaded to call themselves "political prisoners" and to praise the prison administration by promises of a reduction of their sentences.

Some delegations were allowed to visit the prison for Social Democrats in Tiflis, in the Caucasus. But certain other prisons were never visited by foreign delegations or individual travelers—notably, the camp at Solovki, often mentioned in the foreign press, but remaining mysterious; the Suzdal prison (a former monastery, transformed), the "political isolator" of Verkhne-Urals, that of Tobolsk, or that of Yaroslav. One could add numerous prisons and many concentration camps scattered throughout the country. All have remained totally unknown to the naive, or the interested, who [were led] to give, on their return from a "study" trip in "the first Socialist nation", favorable reports on "the new prison régime created by the U.S.S.R.".

And Romain Rolland says that he was able to discover the existence of administrative justice in "Soviet" Russia.

The unleashed repression, the violence against the people, the terror—these made up the crown of the Bolsheviks' work, of their "soviet" régime.

To justify all this horror, they invoked the interests of the Revolution. But nothing could have been more false, more hypocritical, than this attempted justification.

The Anarchists have been exterminated in Russia, they can exist there no longer, simply because they defended the very principles of the Social Revolution, because they struggle for the real economic, political, and social freedom of the people.

The revolutionaries in general, and hundreds of thousands of workers, have been annihilated in Russia by a new authority and by a new privileged caste, which, like all authorities and all privileged castes in the world, have nothing of the revolutionary spirit, and maintain themselves in power only by the thirst to dominate and exploit in their turn. Their system is supported by ruse and violence, like any authoritarian and statist system—necessarily dominator, exploiter, and oppressor.

The "Communist" statist régime is only a variety of the Fascist

régime. It is high time that the workers of all countries understood this, that they reflect upon it, and that they learn profitable lessons from this terrible negative experience.

Moreover, current events are contributing powerfully to this result, and coming events will contribute further to them. As I write these lines, in December, 1939, Bolshevism finally is in the process of going outside of its frontiers, out of its Russian "cage". One will see it at work in due time. I have not the slightest doubt of the nature of the final judgement.

These events will contribute equally, I hope, to a better understanding of the present work and its revelations. And I also hope that this book will enable the reading public to understand certain facts better.

Among other things, it is in the light of these revelations that one can understand the rise of Josef Stalin. As a matter of fact, Stalin did not "fall from the moon". Stalin and "Stalinism" are simply the logical consequences of a preliminary and preparatory evolution, itself the result of a terrible mistake, of an evil deviation of the Revolution.

It was Lenin and Trotsky—that is to say, their system—which prepared the ground for and gave rise to Stalin.

To all those who, having supported Lenin, Trotsky, and their colleagues, today fulminate against Stalin, it must be said: They reap what they sowed!

It is true that logic is not the province of everyone. But let them correct their aim at least, before it is too late.

Fifteen years ago an Anarchist in touch with the facts, wrote certain words—fine, vigorous, and just. These:

> Here are the facts which demonstrate the eternal authoritarian monstrosity. May they make recoil in horror those who venture blindly into the way of dictatorship, whether it be in the name of the vast sublime ideal, or the most logical formula of sociology. May they especially, on the eve of events which might lead to a revolutionary situation, be impelled to take all precautions, not only to avoid the traps in which the Russian Anarchists were caught and slaughtered, but also be capable, in the revolutionary hours, of opposing practical conceptions of production and distribution of goods to those of the Communist dictators.

Later, a little before his death, the Anarchist convictions of the man who wrote those words gave way. In a moment of madness, he approved of Bolshevism.

Happily, if *men*, generally weak and inconsequential beings bend, deform themselves, and pass away, *the truths*, which they formerly proclaimed, *remain*.

PART V

THE BOLSHEVIK STATE

CHAPTER 1
Nature of the Bolshevik State

BY THE end of 1921, the Communist power felt itself completely master of the situation. At least it could consider itself safe from any immediate danger. Its enemies and opponents, both external and internal, and of both the right and the left, were now no longer able to combat it.

From 1922 onward, it could devote itself entirely to dotting its *i's* and crossing its *t's* and consolidating its State.

On the one hand the present Russian State is, in its fundamental aspects, a logical development of what was founded and established in 1918-1921. The subsequent modifications were merely repairs, or the completion of details. We will specify them as they come up.

The Bolshevist State has now existed for 20 years.

What exactly is the nature of that State?

What are its bases, its structure, its essential elements?

It is called the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, for which the abbreviation is U.S.S.R. It pretends to be a "proletarian" or "workers' and peasants' " State. It claims to exercise a "dictatorship of the proletariat". It flatters itself as being "the Workers' Fatherland" and the rampart of Socialism and the Revolution.

How much of this is true? Do the facts and the actions of that State justify these declarations and pretensions?

A rapid examination of the Bolshevik picture will enable an adequate reply to this question.

I say *rapid* examination. In fact, a detailed and more or less complete study of the prevailing Russian State would call for a volume in itself. That is not the purpose of the present work. And after what has gone before in these pages, a general glance will suffice. We will assemble and complete what we have begun.

At this point I want to apprise the uninitiated reader that there now exists in France a rich literature in the form of books, pamphlets, and magazine and newspaper articles which give a fairly exact idea of the structure, functioning, and spirit of this "Soviet" State. [1] Through several years numerous works have appeared which show clearly the true character of that State, the real nature of its government, the situation of the laboring masses there, the precise condition of the economy of the U.S.S.R., its culture, and other aspects. These works bring to light the back-stage aspect and the hidden underside of the Bolshevik régime, its mistakes, its "secret illnesses".

To be sure, the authors of this literature did not seek to get to the bottom of the problem, to reveal *the causes and the consequences* of the "Soviet" State's decline. They make no mention of that "other flame", the libertarian idea, its rôle, and its fate, in the Russian Revolution. To them, as to so many other countries, that is all unexplored territory. They do not offer any solution. But they give the facts sincerely. Thus they make known the false route taken by the "Communist" government since the Revolution, and prove irrefutably its bankruptcy.

Generally these studies provide an abundant and precise documentation.

Here, however, we will confine ourselves to a general "view of the whole". This will be sufficient for our immediate purpose. For it is the general character of this State which especially interests us, to the extent that it illuminates events during and after the Revolution.

We have said earlier that the primary concern of the Bolshevik Party in power was to nationalize all the activity and all the life of Russia, in fact, everything that could be nationalized. It was a question of creating a régime which in modern terminology is called *totalitarian*.

Once in possession of an adequate coercive force, the party and the Government employed it to the utmost in performing this

[1] This was written in 1939.

task. And it was specifically to this end that the "Communist" power created its immense bureaucratic apparatus. It ended by forming a widespread and powerful caste of "responsible" functionaries, which today constitutes a highly privileged stratum of some 2,000,000 individuals. Effective mistress of the country, the Army, and the police, that caste supports, protects, venerates, and flatters Stalin, its idol, its "Tsar", the only man considered capable of maintaining "order" in the U.S.S.R., and of safeguarding its privileges.

Little by little the Bolsheviki nationalized, monopolized, "totalitarianized", easily and quickly, the whole Russian administration, the organizations of industrial workers, peasants, and others; finance; the means of transport; the sub-soil and mining, external commerce and heavy internal commerce, big industry, and land and agriculture, teaching, education, and culture in general, the press and literature, art, science, sport, recreation, and even thought, or at least all of its manifestations.

Nationalization of the workers' organizations in Russia—soviets, unions, shop committees, and other groups—was the easiest and the most rapid. Their independence was abolished. They simply became administrative and executive cogs of the party and the Government.

The Bolshevik Party was led skilfully. The workers did not even realize that they were in the process of being hamstrung. Inasmuch as the State and the Government were now "theirs", it seemed natural to them not to detach themselves from it. They regarded it as normal that their organizations should fulfil functions in the "workers' " State and carry out the decisions of the "comrade commissars".

Soon no autonomous act, no free gesture, by those organizations was permitted. They ended by becoming aware of their error. But then it was too late. When certain workers' organizations, impeded in their actions and restless, feeling that "something was wrong in the Soviet realm", began to show discontent and sought to regain a little independence, the Government opposed them with all its energy and all its trickery. In the first place, it immediately imposed penalties. In the second, it tried to reason with the discontented ones.

"Since," it said to the workers, with the most natural manner in the world, "we now have a workers' State in which the workers

exercise their own dictatorship and in which everything belongs to them, *this State and its organs are yours.* Then of what "independence" can there be a question? Such demands are nonsense. *Independence from what? From whom? From yourselves?* Since the State now is you!

"Not to understand this means not to understand the Revolution that has been accomplished. To oppose this state of things means to oppose the Revolution itself. Such ideas and movements cannot be tolerated, for they can be inspired only by enemies of the Revolution, of the working class, of its State, its dictatorship, and of the workers' power. Those among you who are still ignorant enough to listen to the whispering of these enemies and who lend an ear to their wicked suggestions because everything is not yet perfect in your young State, are committing a veritable counter-revolutionary act."

Needless to say, all those who persisted in protesting and in demanding some independence were pitilessly crushed.

The most difficult thing to achieve was the complete appropriation of the land, and the suppression of the individual cultivator. As we know, it was Stalin who effected this transformation some years ago. Periodically the situation again grows serious and complicated. The struggle between the State and the mass of peasants continues under new forms.

Inasmuch as everything that is indispensable to the labor and activity of man—in other words, everything that is, in the largest sense of the term, capital—belongs to the State in Russia, that country is an example of integral State capitalism. State capitalism: such is the economic, financial, social, and political system of the U.S.S.R., with all of its logical consequences and manifestations in all spheres of life—material, moral, and spiritual.

The correct designation of this State should not be U.S.S.R., but U.S.C.R., meaning Union of State Capitalist Republics.

Economically, this means that *the State is the only real owner* of all the riches of the country, of the whole "national inheritance", of all that is indispensable for millions of men and women to live, work, and act. This includes, we must emphasize, all gold, all money-capital, both national and foreign.

This is the most important thing. It must be understood before all else. The rest follows.

CHAPTER 2
Situation of the Workers

SOCIALLY, THE basis of the system in the domain ruled by Stalin lies in the following facts:

As in all other countries, *the worker in the U.S.S.R. is an employee. But* he is *a State employee.* The State is his only employer. Instead of having thousands of "choices", as is the case in the nations where private capitalism prevails, in the U.S.S.R. (the U.S.C.R.) the worker has only one. Any change of employer is impossible there.

It is pretended that, this State being a "Workers' State", it is not an employer in the usual sense of the word. The profits it realizes from production of commodities do not go into the pockets of capitalists, [so the Stalin régime asserts], but in the last analysis, serve the interests of the workers, returning to them in forms other than money.

Subtle as it may sound, this reasoning is purely theoretical. The "workers' State" is not directed[1] by the workers themselves, (workers can direct production themselves only in an entirely different social system, never in a modern centralized State), but by a very large stratum of functionaries in the pay of the Government, which itself forms the center of a solid group, detached from the masses of toilers, and acting on its own. It is said that it is "answerable" to the workers. This is another abstraction. The reality has nothing in common with the formulas.

Ask any worker in the U.S.S.R.—if he be a simple, real worker —in what form he gets any advantage out of the profits realized by the State above his wages. He won't even understand you;

[1] Naturally I employ the term "direct" in the sense of *organizing*, and of *administration* (a social term), and not in that of *governing* (a political term). A government, even if it were composed of workers (which is not the case in the U.S.S.R.) could serve only the interests of a privileged class which inevitably develops into a statist political system.

he knows nothing about it. The only thing he knows is that he gets his meager wage, always inadequate, and that he has all the difficulty in the world in subsisting on it. He knows also that there are many people in the "Soviet" Union who live "agreeably" (as Stalin has said), richly, luxuriously.

Ask him if he can bring pressure to bear on those who are purportedly "answerable" to the workers, if he can criticize them, call them to order, eliminate them, replace them. He will understand you still less. What he knows is that he has only to carry out the orders of his chiefs "who know what they are doing", and that the least criticism of them would cost him dearly. Those chiefs are imposed on him by the Government and are answerable only to it. As for the Government, it is infallible, and unassailable: its answerability is a myth.

Let us see a little of the real situation of the worker in the U.S.S.R. Does it differ essentially from that of the workers in the countries where private capitalism flourishes?

As everywhere else, the worker in Stalin's domain is obliged to present himself, on payday, at the paymaster's window in the establishment where he is employed, to get his wages. These wages are paid to him by a functionary, the paymaster of his only boss, the State.

That functionary makes up his payroll according to the wage scale decreed by the Government. He withholds from the wages whatever the State-employer considers it necessary to withhold: so much for Red Aid, so much for bonds ("free", but compulsory, a Soviet sophism), so much for foreign propaganda, so much for the national lottery (another "free" but compulsory institution). He pays the worker exactly as does any other paymaster, employed in any other shop in any other country. Naturally the workers in the U.S.S.R. have no knowledge of what the State gains from his wages, nor what the State does with those gains. "That's the Government's business", and the worker hasn't the slightest intention of getting mixed up with that problem.

But in a country where private capitalism prevails, the worker, if he is dissatisfied, can quit his employer and look for another. He can change his shop, go where he likes, do what he pleases.

All this is impossible in the U.S.S.R., where there is only one

employer, owner of all the factories. Conforming to the latest laws, the worker hasn't even the right to "ask for his time" and quit the factory where he is employed, on his own. For that he must have the authorization of the management. And this management is made up of functionaries who, for a long time, have replaced the factory committees. Thus the worker is attached to his place of work in the manner of a serf or a slave. [1]

If the Russian worker leaves a factory without a special authorization written on his compulsory identity card, or if he is fired, he cannot work anywhere else without re-authorization. No factory director, functionary of the same State-employer, can hire him, under pain of severe penalties.

Under these conditions, the State-employer can do with the worker what it likes. It treats him like a slave. The worker is obliged to accept everything that is thrust upon him: he has neither a choice of employer, nor means of defense (his labor union being in the hands of the government-employer and pretending not to understand that a union member can defend himself "against his own government"), nor any way of existing except at the end of his tether. Unless he "untangles" himself somehow.

And he cannot complain nor make himself heard, the press also being in the hands of "his government", speech belonging to it, and meetings not being permitted except on official order. In a country as large as Russia, the best method of "getting untangled" has always been vagabondage. This practice has not changed. Thousands and thousands of ex-workers there, having quit their jobs "irregularly", and finding themselves on the outs with the authorities, have revived the old tradition and have taken to the roads. They form a significant mass of unemployed of which the Soviet press naturally does not speak.

The laws in the U.S.S.R. concerning workers in general and factory work in particular are extremely harsh. Tens of thousands of toilers languish and perish in the prisons and places of exile for the sole reason of having broken them.

[1] The reader should not suspect me of preferring private capitalism. I state a fact, nothing more. It is evident that freedom to choose an employer is a small thing. But to live and work under the eternal threat of losing the only exploiter possible is not pleasant. This threat, suspended constantly over the head of the worker in the U.S.S.R., makes him a slave. That is all I meant to say.

And the work is difficult.—Except in the large centers, the hygienic conditions in the shops are deplorable, the general surroundings impoverished. Nearly everywhere, too, there is hard labor at piece-work and the Taylor system is applied.

Prevalence of "*stakhanovism*" throughout the Soviet Union testifies to this. (The reader will find other testimonies and irrefutable proofs of what we say about labor conditions there in various other works.[1])

The truth about *stakhanovism* is not well enough known outside of the Russian domain. That term comes from the name of a miner, Alexei Stakhanov, chosen by the Bolshevik authorities for the purpose of a vast campaign to intensify the output of the workers. It was a question, for the magnates of "Soviet" neocapitalism of applying in the U.S.S.R. the principle of the Taylor system [gleaned from the United States] without using the term and without the appearance of its having been instigated by the Government.

One day Stakhanov made, spontaneously, it was asserted, a sensational declaration to his bosses, claiming that he had discovered a new principle of organizing the work of mining coal which enabled the increasing of production by x times. Immediately the Government "became interested" in the discovery, found it useful, made a big stir about it, and undertook a far-flung campaign to introduce the new method everywhere in Russia.

In fact, however, Stakhanov, inspired and pushed by the Bolshevik Party, had only "discovered" America. His "new" method was only an old device which had just made its first appearance across the Atlantic: to be specific, *the assembly line* [the speed-up, as used in the Ford automobile and other industrial plants] adapted to Russian conditions. But the "stage setting" [given to Stakhanov's prodigious daily output of coal] and the far-reaching publicity which it got made of it an extraordinary and fortunate discovery. The boneheads and the simpletons abroad took it all very seriously.

That "discovery" became the special business of the State-employer. It permitted it to hope for a general raising of the

[1] See, for instance, *Workers Before and After Lenin*, by Manya Gordon; New York: Dutton, 1941.

workers' output. Then it impelled the Government to form a privileged stratum among the workers, a formation which was exceedingly helpful to governmental need for heightened production—the privileged ones being, generally, competent leaders of men, and thus could be used to facilitate manipulation of the toiling masses. And finally, in certain circles, it enhanced the prestige of the government-employer.

The new efficiency system was inaugurated by means of intense publicity in the press, on posters, and in speeches at public meetings. Stakhanov was proclaimed a "hero of labor", rewarded, decorated. His system was applied in other branches of industry. Everywhere jealous "rivals" set about imitating him and even surpassing his output. All these individuals were ambitious to distinguish themselves, to "rise from the ranks", to "arrive"—naturally to the detriment of the workers as a whole, they being forced to submit to a new speed-up, that is, to increased exploitation, under the supervision of the "heroes". The latter rose on the backs of the others. They obtained advantages and privileges to the extent that they succeeded in applying the system and dragging along the masses. The "emulation" of the *stakhanovists* among themselves accordingly gave rise to *superstakhanovism.*

Soon the mass of workers understood the real meaning of the innovation. Powerless to oppose this "super-exploitation by any general movement, they manifested their discontent by numerous acts of sabotage and vengeance, even going so far as to assassinate over-zealous stakhanovists. It became necessary for the government to resort to extremely severe measures to repress the anti-stakhanovist movement. Moreover, the enterprise shortly ended in nothing. Once the bluff was seen through, all that remained was a sort of workers' opportunism which no longer played a really effective rôle in production.

The "nationalized" worker in the U.S.S.R. is at least in principle a *modern* slave. *On condition of being docile and zealous, he is fairly well maintained,* insured by his "lord", rewarded with a paid vacation, et cetera. Nevertheless this, in reality, is a matter here of only a tightly restricted part of the working class. That class is divided into several categories. The difference in their conditions of life ranges from ease to poverty, through all inter-

mediary stages. The favors go only to the workers "worthy of them". To be well-paid, to have vacations and other advantages, it is necessary to deserve them, to detach oneself from the crowd, to "climb".

The overwhelming majority of the workers in the Soviet Union endure a miserable existence—especially the unskilled, the day-laborers, the domestics, the small employees, and, in general, the mass of average workers. Others, skilled and specialized, privileged slaves, have a relatively "good" life, and form a sort of "workers' aristocracy".

Most frequently, the latter distrust and repulse their unfortunate class comrades. The struggle for existence is bitter in the U.S.S.R. So much the worse for the victims. Let them take care of themselves. If one concerns himself with them, he soon becomes a victim himself. But the skilled and privileged worker, the true *stakhanovist*—worthy disciple of the famous Stakhanov, first worker-careerist—is ambitious for higher and higher positions. He has hopes of rising, some day, out of the ranks of the slaves, to become himself a functionary, some kind of a chief, perhaps a director.

He must do everything possible to rise He demeans himself; he does four men's work; he trains the youths who will replace him in the shop; he makes himself noticed everywhere he can; he is always in agreement with the authorities and he emphasizes that; he is a candidate for the Party; he flatters and curries favor here, he covers himself there. But, ahead of everything else, it is necessary that he never become involved with those below him, nor with those on his own level. The struggle is hard in the Soviet Union.

The *stakhanovist* workers are primarily *"pace-setters"*, whose rôle is to demonstrate by example to the mass of workers that it is possible to intensify production. They are highly paid and are given advancements, especially the *superstakhanovists*, who are the "aces" of *stakhanovism*. Their rôle is to show the proletarian masses that if they work well they can "attain" a comfortable and even "agreeable" life. (Again, Stalin's word).

In the majority of instances, once a new output-record has been established in a factory, it is impossible for a stakhanovist to remain there; the other workers will not let him live. Generally the authorities take care of such a faithful servant. Usually he is

sent to a sanitarium, where he sojourns "comfortably" for several months—after which he is called to an administrative post in Moscow or some other large city, where he has a stylish villa at his disposal and where he lives an "agreeable" life, getting a salary and enjoying prerogatives in proportion to the services he has rendered. His career is made. He is now a functionary. He has risen from the ranks. He has "arrived".

By all such procedures—*stakhanovism, superstakhanovism,* classification in various categories of wages, et cetera—the "Communist" government manages effectively to divide and control the working masses. It creates, at the same time, a privileged stratum which is obsequiously devoted to it, which keeps the "herd" on the alert, and which serves as a buffer between the masters and the slaves.

Thus the practices employed by the new masters—the "Communists"—toward the working class remain what they always were: to divide and dominate. And the consoling word spoken by the master to the "herd" also is eternal: "Workers, do you want to get ahead? Well, that depends solely on yourselves, for any capable man, who is diligent and applies himself, can become 'someone'. Those who do not succeed, the failures, have only themselves to blame."

According to the meticulous and objective calculations of the economist E. Yurievsky, *taken from the statistics of the Government of the U.S.S.R.,* out of some 18,000,000 workers in 1938, there were about 1,500,000 (8 per cent.) of ex-workers and privileged workers: *stakhanovists* and *superstakhanovists, et al.*

It is of course understandable that the Government should encourage and reward this careerism from which it gains such huge profits and which, incidentally, it never calls by that name. Instead the competition in speed-up is lauded as "noble emulation", "honorable zeal in the service of the proletariat", and the like. There is a decoration "for zeal". And there is even a whole stratum of "decorated workers"—*ordenonostsi.* From the most "worthy" of these elements, the Government creates a sort of new "Soviet" nobility, and also a new State-capitalist bourgeoisie: determined and solid supporters of the régime in the Kremlin.

And it is to all such climbers that Stalin, their supreme chief,

refers, when he says in some of his speeches: "Life among us becomes always more agreeable, more cheerful."

The herd in the Soviet Union remains the herd, as everywhere else. And as elsewhere, the Government possesses "sufficient means to keep it at its mercy, tranquil and subdued".

It is contended that its methods prepare the ground for "real Communism".

We have asked ourselves whether the lot of the worker in the U.S.S.R. is preferable to that of the worker in the countries where private capitalism continues. But the real problem is not that. It is more precisely this: Is such a state of affairs compatible with Socialism? Or is this, at least, the dawn of it? Can such an organization, such a social background, lead us there?

The reader is invited to answer these questions himself—and others as well—when he reaches the end of this book.

CHAPTER 3
Situation of the Peasants

FOUR SUCCESSIVE periods must be distinguished.

At first, seeking to gain and consolidate the sympathies of Russia's vast laboring masses and the Army, the Bolshevik government practiced a *"laissez faire"* policy toward the peasants. And the peasants—as the reader knows—began to take the land, the landlords either being in flight or having been driven out long before the October Revolution. The Lenin régime had only to approve this state of affairs.[1]

"By themselves, the soldiers stopped the war, while the peasants took over the land and the workers the factories," we are told by Paul Milioukov, well-known Russian historian and writer, and ex-Foreign Minister of the first provisional government. "Lenin had only to sanction the accomplished fact to make sure of the sympathies of the soldiers, the peasants, and the workers."[2]

There is much truth in this statement of the bourgeois leader, although he is wrong not to take any notice of the influence of the activity and propaganda of the revolutionists. With this reservation, his testimony is particularly interesting. Milioukov always was a keen observer and interpreter of Russian life. He held a post which permitted him to obtain sound information. Finally, he had no reason to diminish the rôle of the Bolsheviks. (We should note in passing that this testimony is very suggestive, not only in regard to the worker and peasant problem during the war, but also to the problem of war).

Notice [is pertinent here] to all who, intentionally or through ignorance, contend that the Revolution was achieved, not by the

[1] Decree of October 25, 1917. [But in the fourth paragraph of Chapter xxv Voline gives October 26 as the date of what apparently is the same decree.]

[2] Milioukov, Paul, *History of Russia,* Volume III, p. 1274.

masses, but by the Bolsheviki. Here is a point to underline: That, fundamentally, *the October Revolution,* like the one in February, *was accomplished by the masses,* of course with the help and support of revolutionists of all schools. The masses were ready for the new revolution; they achieved it from day to day, everywhere, at the moment. That is what is important; that is what it means to "accomplish a revolution". As for the Bolsheviks, they performed a purely political act in taking power. *That inevitably had to occur in the course of this popular revolution on the march.* By their political act, the Bolsheviki stopped the real Revolution, and caused its deviation.

They claim that if they had not taken power, the counter-revolution would have regained control and the Revolution would have been defeated. That assertion is gratuitous. The Bolsheviks were able to seize power *because the vast masses were for the Revolution.* The "masses" mainly were the [industrial] workers, the peasants, and the soldiers. With the workers taking over the factories, the peasants seizing the land, the revolutionaries helping both, and the soldiers being partisans of the Revolution, what [possible] force—without industry, without funds, without help, and without an army—could have stopped it? Foreign intervention? Who knows what would have been the situation and the attitude in other countries if the Russian Revolution had taken the course visualized by the Anarchists? Who knows what the consequences would have been? At that moment, the two theses should have been debated publicly. The Bolsheviks preferred to suppress the other, and the world has been suffering the consequences for a quarter of a century.

The statement [by Miloukov], among others, confirms the fundamental thesis of the Anarchists. They had maintained, in fact, that when the essential and favorable conditions would come into being, the masses would be perfectly capable of achieving the Revolution themselves, with the aid and support of the revolutionaries. They add (and this is the essential point of their outlook) that after the victory, the Revolution should follow the same course —free action of the masses, supported by the free action of the revolutionaries of all schools, without any political party, having eliminated the others, installing itself in power, imposing its dictatorship, and monopolizing the Revolution.

Therefore, in the beginning—*in the first period*—Lenin did not bother the peasants. It was for this reason, among others, that the latter supported him, thus leaving him the time necessary to consolidate his power and his State. At that stage it was even said—especially abroad—that the peasants were the ones who had gained the most from the Russian Revolution, and that the Bolsheviks, despite the Marxist doctrine, were obliged to base themselves, not on the working class but on the peasant class.

But later—*in the second period*—to the extent that the State strengthened itself and in the measure that the cities, their provisions exhausted, turned their attention to the country, Lenin began to close the circle around the peasants more and more.

If the workers in the cities and the industrial regions had had, through their independent and active organizations, freedom of initiative and action, they certainly would have established direct and fruitful economic contact with the peasants for production and exchange. One can be sure that such contact between the free producers of the cities and the country would have led to alliances and finally to a practical and satisfactory solution of this basic problem of the Social Revolution—that of the relations between the two classes of toilers, between the two essential branches of the national economy.

But, look! The workers and their organizations had no freedom of action, no freedom of initiative. And likewise the peasants had neither. Everything was concentrated in the hands of the State, of the Government. It alone could act, venture, resolve.

Under these conditions, naturally everybody awaited its decisions.

The peasants who, at the direct suggestions and proposals of the workers certainly would have done, on their own initiative, long before and in a natural way, spontaneous and simple, what was necessary for the cities, now did not move, while the Government—which was there for that purpose—did not make its intentions known.

By its presence and its very functions, a government interposes itself between the two strata of workers and separates them. Automatically, it prevents them from conferring. since it takes charge of intervening between the two as an intermediary, an arbiter.

Therefore Lenin intervened. Naturally, as a Marxist dictator, he understood nothing of the real situation. He explained the indifferent attitude of the peasants, not as an inevitable consequence of the application of false governmental principles, but as a manifestation of their "egoism", their "petty-bourgeois mentality", their "hostility to the cities".

He acted brutally. Through a series of decrees and ordinances, he called upon the peasants to turn over the greater part of their harvest to the State. That summons was supported by the armed forces and the police. This was the period of requisitions, of impositions, of "armed expeditions", in short, of "war Communism". The military violence was thrust upon the peasants in order to take from them all that the State needed.

The peasants were forbidden to sell their products. Around the railroads, on the highways, and around the cities, "barricades" were set up to prevent such selling, which the State called "speculation". Thousands of peasants and other "citizens" were arrested and some of them were shot for violating those [anti-sales decrees]. It should be unnecessary to say that it was primarily the poor wretches who were carrying a sack of flour to a city for the sole purpose of enabling themselves to increase their daily sustenance, or else the peasants who came to help their famished relatives or friends, who were caught. The *real* big-time speculators easily "forced" the barricades by greasing palms. Once more, in a statist system, the reality mocked the "theory".

Soon this policy led to serious disturbances. The peasants opposed the violence with fierce resistance. They hid their wheat; they reduced their crops to the proportions strictly necessary to satisfy their own needs; they killed their livestock, sabotaged the work; they took a stand against the perquisitions and requisitions here and there; they assassinated more and more frequently the "commissars" in charge of these operations.

Now the cities found themselves threatened with famine, and no improvement in the situation could be envisaged. The workers, undergoing bitter privations, understanding more and more the true reasons for this failure, and seeking to save the Revolution, began to be seriously disturbed. And part of the Army showed itself fairly disposed to support this mass movement. (It was then

that there arose, in March, 1921, the great uprising in Kronstadt). The situation became critical.

Believing that the State, that is to say, all the forces of support and coercion, were insufficiently consolidated to impose its will upon the country at any cost, Lenin retreated. Soon after Trotsky's "victory" over Kronstadt, he [Lenin] proclaimed the famous N.E.P., the "New Economic Policy".

The N.E.P. marks *the third period* in the evolution of the agrarian problem. It was "new", however, only in relation to the pitiless rigor and the military measures of the preceding period. It simply provided some degree of relaxation. The pressure was let up a little to satisfy the bellies of the peasants and to appease their spirits. The "new policy" granted them a certain amount of liberty in disposing of the product of their labor: notably to sell a part of it freely in the open market. The barricades were eliminated. Small traders benefited from some "liberalities". Individual property recovered some rights.

But, for a thousand reasons, the N.E.P. did not change anything basic. It did not constitute a solution. It was a half-measure, vague and doubtful. To be sure, it cleared the atmosphere a bit. But it created, at the same time, an aspect of irresolution and disorganization. Speedily it led to confusion and contradictions heavy with consequences, both in the economic field and in the life of the country in general.

Moreover, the equivocal and unstable situation which it brought about represented a decided danger to the government's security. Having made concessions, the Bolshevik régime admitted a certain weakness. This indirect admission raised the hopes of the bourgeois circles. It gave a new impetus to forces and elements whose activity and spirit could quickly become seditious and even perilous for the régime. This was all the more true in that the sympathies for the masses for Bolshevism had been greatly weakened since 1917, which the Government knew very well. The eventual reawakening of the bourgeois appetites among some elements of the peasantry appeared particularly serious.

The members of the Bolshevik Party and the privileged strata already formed in the new State, and fairly influential, were afraid. They insisted that it was necessary for the government to put an

end to "the pause of the N.E.P." and return to the régime of the State-employer and the State mailed-fist.

For all these reasons Josef Stalin, the successor of Lenin, who died in 1924, felt obliged to choose between two solutions: either enlarge the N.E.P., which would mean, despite the possession of the "levers of control", opening the doors to the economic and perhaps political restoration of a private capitalistic régime—or else return to integral statism, to a totalitarian régime, and resume the offensive of the State against the peasants.

Having weighed everything, sure of the acquired power and mastery of the State, assured of the active support of the privileged strata as well as of the support of a sizeable part of the Army, completely subjugated, and of all the coercive forces of his "apparatus", Stalin finally decided in favor of the second solution. At the end of 1928 he proceeded to effect the total nationalization of Russia's agriculture: a nationalization called "collectivization", and representing *the fourth period* of the evolution of the peasant problem.

Through force of arms, through terror which before long took on unheard-of forms and proportions, the State set about taking away from the peasant who had remained a land-owner his piece of land, even though that property were middle-sized or small. Thus it gained effective and complete possession of the soil.

Prior to that operation it was necessary to distinguish in the U.S.S.R. three factors in the situation:

1. The *sovkhoz*, an abbreviation of the Russian words, "Soviet possessions", which were *exploited directly by the State.*
2. The *kolkhoz*, meaning "collective possessions", which were *exploited communally by the peasants*, working under the control and direction of the State.
3. The individual cultivator, a sort of State farmer, who, like the *kolkhoz*, then owed a part of his product to the State.

This distinction disappeared with the "collectivization". From that time onward *all agriculture became a direct enterprise of the State, effective lord of the land.* Each "agricultural workshop" took the name of *kolkhoz.*

Every peasant was compelled by force to enter a *kolkhoz*. His piece of land and his other possessions were confiscated. And, we must emphasize, it was not only a question of the more or less well-off peasants, but also of *millions of poor farmers*, who had just enough to feed themselves, not employing help and possessing solely what was strictly necessary for their individual labor.

Since then every peasant in the U.S.S.R. has been compulsorily attached to a *kolkhoz*, as the [industrial] worker is to a factory. The State has transformed him not only into a State farmer, but into a serf, and forces him to work for his new master. And like all real masters, it leaves him, out of the product of his toil, only the indispensable minimum to maintain life. The rest, the major part, is put at the disposal of the Government. And also, like all real masters, the latter decides how this shall be made use of, without the peasant having the slightest say in the matter. True, this surplus does not go to enrich the capitalists, but there are other strata [the privileged] to enrich in the Soviet Union.

Theoretically the State "buys" the products from the *kolkhoz*. It is in this way that it remunerates the peasants for their labor. But, being the only landlord and purchaser, it pays an absurdly low price for those commodities. That remuneration is only a new form of exploitation of the peasant masses by the capitalistic State.

To understand this, it suffices to say that, according to the reports of the "Soviet" press, *the State realized, in* 1936, *a profit of nearly* 25,000,000 *rubles from the re-sale of products bought from the kolkhozes.* Again, *in* 1937, *the kolkhozists got only* 50 *per cent. of the real value of the products of their labor.* The remainder was retained as taxes, administrative expenses, various revenues, et cetera.

Nearly all of the peasant population in the U.S.S.R. finds itself today in a state of serfdom. This agricultural organization recalls the famous "military colonies" of Araktcheiev in the time of Tsar Alexander I. In fact, "Soviet" agriculture is "mechanized", "bureaucratized", "militarized".

To arrive at that goal, Stalin had to use terrible methods of violence against the peasants. In many places, the countryside did not accept the announced reforms with good grace: It was recalcit-

rant. Stalin had expected this. He did not hesitate. Millions of peasants were imprisoned, deported, or shot for the least resistance. Detachments of "special" troops—a sort of militarized police force—primarily fulfilled that task. In the course of these "expeditions" a number of recalcitrant or rebel villages were demolished by artillery and machine-guns and burned.

And, parallel with those upheavals, several famines devastated whole regions and carried off other millions of victims.

Finally, "might was right". There is no reason to be astonished or to be skeptical about our revelations. *We know from other examples,* such as those of Fascism and Hitlerism, *to what an extent an authoritarian régime,* armed with all the modern methods, *can subjugate the masses,* and impose its will upon them, despite all resistance and all obstacles, *so long as the police and the Army obey it.*

Some say that the Bolshevik government had no other means to safeguard its régime, to save the country from permanent famine and other disasters worse than the remedy, to "make agricultural progress", and to "assure the march toward Socialism".

We agree—except for the goals.

Yes, the statist, governmental process has no other means than these. But that is, precisely, irrefutable proof that its doctrine is erroneous and that the situation created is insoluble. *For by such means Socialism will never be achieved.*

This system can "assure" a march, not toward Socialism, but toward State capitalism, which is more abominable than private capitalism. And this system is not at all a "transitional" state, as they [the "Communists"] frequently wish to make us believe; it is simply another method of domination and exploitation. It will have to be combated as other systems, based on domination and exploitation, have been and are being combated.

As for the "progress of agriculture", we are convinced that the true progressive collectivization of this branch—as indeed of the whole economy—will have to be achieved by forces which have nothing in common with those of a statist political dictatorship.

We have said that for a while the agrarian problem became seriously complicated in the U.S.S.R. The peasant masses carried on a struggle, blind but effective, against the State-employer, and sabotaged the work of the *kolkhoz;* the agricultural output began

to fall catastrophically. In order to stimulate the *kolkhozists* and to reconcile them to the system, they were then allowed, within the *kolkhoz* itself, a certain amount of individual property, very restricted, a little land, a few animals, some tools. And the *kolkhozist* was permitted to work a little for himself.

The inevitable result of this measure was not slow in making itself felt: the struggle between the peasant and the State soon crystalized itself around this "private sector" ("around the cow", they [the Russians] in the country say).

Since then the peasants have tried stubbornly to increase their "property", their rights, and their personal work, to the detriment of the *kolkhoz*. Naturally the State has opposed this tendency. But, on the other hand, it has been compelled to spare as much as possible the "individual sector", the output of which is superior to that of the *kolkhoz*, and which contributes largely to the State's prosperity.

At present this struggle and these hesitations combine to make up the nerve center of the agrarian problem in the "Soviet" Union. It is not impossible that that domain is on the eve of a new and fifth period in its agricultural evolution.

We must note, however, that these details and others change nothing of the general picture which we have just painted.

CHAPTER 4
Situation of the Functionaries

The third social stratum in the U.S.S.R., the importance of which has become enormous, is that of the bureaucrats, the *functionaries.*

From the moment when direct relations between the various categories of workers were suppressed, as well as their initiative and freedom of action, the functioning of the State machine, of necessity, had to be assured by intermediaries dependent on the central direction of the machine. The name which has been given to these intermediaries—*functionaries*—describes perfectly their rôle, which consists of *making* [something] *function.*

In the "liberal" countries the functionaries make function what relates to the State. But in a country where the State is all, they are called upon to make everything function. This means that they are responsible for organizing, co-ordinating, supervising; in short with making the whole life of the country, economic and otherwise, go.

In a country as immense as the U.S.S.R., this "civil army" of the State-employer must be extraordinarily large. And, in fact, *the caste of the functionaries there* has been raised to several millions. According to E. Yourievsky, cited earlier, their total number *exceeds* 9,000,000. One must not forget that in [that vast territory] there are neither municipalities nor other services or organizations independent of the State, nor any kind of private enterprise.

It goes without saying that, apart from the small subordinate employees, [the functionaries] form the most privileged social strata. In this respect only the top military ranks can equal them. The services which they render to their employer (the State) are inestimable. Along with the Army and the police, also enormous and well organized, the "Soviet" bureaucracy is a force of the first

importance. Fundamentally, everything depends on it. Not only does it serve the State, organize it, rule it, make it go, and control it—but what is much more valuable, *it actively and faithfully supports the* [*Stalinist*] *régime*, on which it depends entirely.

In the name of the government which it represents, the top bureaucracy commands, dictates, orders, prescribes, supervises, punishes. And the middle and even the petty bureaucracy also command and administer, each functionary being master in the sphere assigned to him. Hierarchically, all are responsible to their superiors. The highest are responsible to the chief-functionary, the great, genial, infallible Dictator.

The functionaries give themselves body and soul to the Government, which knows how to reward them for this. With the exception of the herd of petty employees, whose position corresponds to that of the herd of [industrial and rural] workers, the "responsible" functionaries in the U.S.S.R. are the object of ceaseless concern. Good remuneration and advancement are guaranteed to all functionaries worthy of these favors. All docile and diligent functionaries are well paid, pampered, felicitated, decorated. The most devoted and zealous advance rapidly in office and may hope to attain the highest posts in the State.

But the medal has its reverse side. Basically, every functionary is an instrument, a puppet in the hands of his superiors. The least fault, error, or negligence can cost him much. Responsible only to his chiefs, he is punished by them administratively, according to their judgement, without any other form of trial. It means complete destitution, frequently prison, sometimes death. The personal caprice and despotism of the chiefs rule with no appeal.

The most terrible aspect of that situation is that often the punished functionary is only a scapegoat, his "fault" or his failure being imputable either to the defective orders of his superiors, or to general conditions, or to the policy of the Government. "Stalin is always right"—like Hitler in Germany. If there is a failure, the guilty are quickly found. Frequently also, the matter is deeply anchored in the traditions of "Soviet" bureaucracy. The guilty one falls victim to the struggle for existence: rivalry, jealousy, intrigues —these elements, inseparable from unbridled careerism, lie in wait for the functionary every moment of his life.

On the other hand, certain misdeeds in the private lives of high functionaries, going sometimes as far as debauchery, are tolerated by the Government, as one kind of necessary relaxation. The G.P.U. closes its eyes. Its chiefs participate. The famous Henrikh Yagoda was a perverted libertine. And there are still orgies in Moscow.

"To arrive"—at any price and by any means, without letting oneself be caught: such is the greatest concern and one of the strongest stimulants in the "Soviet" Union.

From a little above the level of the gigantic herd of 150,000,000 [industrial] workers, peasants, and petty employees, every beginning functionary can, by showing himself devoutly and blindly submissive, and by knowing how to fawn and "bend the knee", attain "the good life".

It is this hope which today pushes every young citizen in the U.S.S.R. toward education and study. He aspires and hopes, like the *stakhanovist*, to "rise from the ranks"—he, who flounders in poverty. He is ambitious for a position as a chief, a carriage, a leather brief-case, a pair of good boots, a good salary, and decorations. On such a road, he does not bother about his neighbor. He knows perfectly how to flatter, pay homage, be obsequious and servile.

To become aware of all this, one needs to follow closely all that happens in [the vast territory dominated by the Kremlin]. It is necessary to read the "Soviet" press attentively, if one is to know Russian life, mentality, and general customs. The speeches and harrangues of the chiefs, the periodic distribution of decorations, the declarations and statements of delegates to the Congress, the local news and the daily "little stories" which find their place and their echoes in the "Soviet" newspapers—all this documentation puts him who knows how to read it and understand it in touch with the situation.

According to Yourievsky, out of about 10,000,000 functionaries in the U.S.S.R., 2,000,000, or 20 per cent., are privileged. The rest lead a more or less painful existence, made tolerable only by the hope of "rising" and "arriving".

If we gather together all of our information, we obtain the following table, the figures being approximate:

1.500,000	privileged workers out of	18,000,000
2,000,000	privileged functionaries out of	10,000,000
4,000,000	well-to-do peasants out of	142,000,000
2,500,000	variously privileged; members of the Bolshevik Party (independent of their functions), specialists, soldiers, police, et cetera.	
10,000,000	privileged of all kinds out of	170,000,000

These 10,000,000 constitute the new privileged class in the "Soviet" Union and the real support of the Stalin régime.

The rest of the population—160,000,000 souls—are only a more or less unknown herd, subjugated, exploited, impoverished.

CHAPTER 5
Political Structure

IN OUR analysis of the rôle of the functionaries, we touch upon the political structure of the U.S.S.R.

Politically it is governed by the high State functionaries (as France, according to a time-honored formula, is governed by the *prefects*), and administered by an innumerable army of subordinate functionaries under their command.

It remains for us to support this statement with certain indispensable details. Ahead of everything else, it is necessary to distinguish between two absolutely different elements. *The one consists of appearance*, decorations, the stage setting, (the sole heritage of the glorious October Revolution); *the other is the reality.*

In appearance, the U.S.S.R. is governed by the *soviets.* ("The Soviets everywhere!" shout the French Communists, without knowing what to believe about the "soviets", without having the slightest notion of their real history and their real rôle).

Nothing could be more false. The good people abroad who still believe sincerely in this myth are letting themselves be royally "rolled".

Without losing ourselves in details, let us establish the essential facts, emphasizing the characteristics that are unknown or little known.

For a very long time the soviets (*workers' councils*) *have not played any important rôle in the U.S.S.R., either politically or socially.* Their use is wholly secondary, and even insignificant. They are purely administrative, executive organs, in charge of minor local duties of no importance, entirely subordinated to the "directives" of the central authorities: the government and directing organs of the "Communist" Party.....*The Soviets do not have even the shadow of power.*

A great misunderstanding about the Soviets prevails outside of Russia. For many workers in other countries, the term *soviet* has something mysterious about it. A mass of sincere, naive people—"dopes", as the saying goes—mistaking bladders for lanterns, have faith in the "Socialist" and "revolutionary" *decor* of the new impostors. In Russia, the masses are forced by violence and other methods of control to accept that imposture (exactly as in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy). But millions of workers in other countries naively let themselves be hoodwinked, unaware of the fraud of which they will one day be the first victims.

Let us clear up this question of the Soviets.

Two essential facts must be emphasized:

First: The creation of the "Soviets" in Russia took place only because of the absence of other workers' organizations, under the pressing necessity of setting up mechanism for information, coordination, and common action in various factories. It is certain that if Russia had possessed labor unions and a Syndicalist movement in 1905, the idea of forming soviets never would have arisen, and recourse never would have been had to these vague organisms, completely fortuitous and purely representative.

Second: Basically, a soviet is not an organism of the class struggle, of revolutionary action. It can only be a living active cell, of the social transformation or of the new society in the process of birth. By its very structure it is a weak, passive institution, of a rather bureaucratic, or, at its best, administrative character. A Soviet can take care of certain small local duties, nothing more. *It is a sort of workers' municipal council.* But—and this is serious —because of its structure, and especially of its pretensions, it can become, under certain circumstances, an instrument in the hands of a political party or of a government, as was the case in Russia. Thus it is subject to "the political disease", and, consequently, spells a certain danger for the Revolution.

For these two reasons, *this whole famous system* of the "Soviets", product of the specific conditions in which the workers' movement in Russia found itself, *has no interest and no utility for workers in countries where Syndicalist organs, a Syndicalist movement, and a Syndicalist struggle exist; nor for countries in which the workers have had their class organizations of combat and social*

reconstruction for a long time; nor for countries where the laboring masses have prepared for a final direct struggle, outside the State, political parties, and any kind of government.

In appearance, we have said, Russia is governed by the Soviets ("free emanations of the working class", according to the myth spread abroad). Theoretically today—that is, according to the old "Soviet" written constitution, the supreme power in the U.S.S.R. belongs to the Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets, convoked periodically, and having, in principle, the right to name, eliminate, or replace the Government. In principle, the Soviets hold the legislative power, and their "executives" the executive power.

But in reality it is the Government itself—the Council of People's Commissars, direct emanation of the Communist Party —which holds, in an absolute way, *all the force* and *all the power*, both legislative and executive, in the country.

It is the Government that is master, not the Soviets.

It is the Government which can, if it wishes, wipe out the Congress of Soviets, or any Soviet taken separately, or any member of a Soviet in case of opposition or disobedience. For it is the Government which holds all the "levers of command".

Yet that is not all. The real government is not even the Council of People's Commissars, which is itself *only an ornament*, but rather the *Politbureau* (political bureau), which consists of a few top men of the C.P., members of its central committee. That isn't all either. In fact, it is the brutal and cunning chief of the party and of the central committee, the "great" and "genial" *Stalin* (or whoever replaces him) who *is the real supreme power*: the dictator, the *Vojd* (Duce or Führer) of the country. This man can say, with much more reason than Louis XIV: *"L'Etat* (the U.S.S.R.) *c'est moi!"* ("I am the State!").

It is Stalin (or his eventual successor) who is [or will be] supported by the "arcopagus (the *Politbureau*), the Council of People's Commissars, the whole party, the "candidates" (aspirants) for the party, the privileged strata, the bureaucracy, the "apparatus", the Army, and the police. For all this world depends on him, materially and morally, and only exists thanks to him. All this world believes blindly in his strength and skill in safeguarding the régime, which is constantly threatened by formless discontent and

the rage—for the moment powerless—of the deceived, subjugated, and exploited masses.

It is he, the "great leader", and then the *Politburo,* the party's central committee, and the Council of People's Commissars, who impose their will on the Soviets, and not the reverse.

Some claim that Stalin and all these institutions rule *by the will of the people*: for, it is said, all the members of the Government, of the directing organs, and of the Soviets are elected, freely and secretly. But, by closely examining the mechanism and the provisions which regulate them, it is easy to see even without participating in them, that these "free and secret" elections are merely a comedy (more or less like everywhere else).

If, at the very beginning, the elections to the Soviets were relatively secret[1]—the vast masses being for the Soviets, the Government had nothing to fear on that score, and moreover, it was impossible to deceive the masses immediately—this relative freedom has not been in existence for a long time now. For years the elections in the "Soviet" Union have been neither free nor secret, and although *this is entirely official,* it does not displease the ignorant "followers" in other countries, who have always denied the facts. It is notorious, in fact, that the pretended "freedom" and "secrecy" of elections were "granted" to the people recently, by the famous "democratic Constitution" of Stalin. And the real purpose of that gesture was to appease the growing discontent in the U.S.S.R., and further, to throw dust in the eyes of foreign workers.

Henceforth Stalin and his government had the certainty of being able to remain masters of the situation, despite the "freedom" and "secrecy" of the elections. The "apparatus" of the State was sufficiently solid—and the people sufficiently subdued—so that the Government had the herd of voters at its mercy, despite the "freedoms" granted. The very text of the "Constitution" permits one to discern the calculations.

Today, in spite of all appearances, the elections are inspired, even imposed, led, organized, and supervised closely by innumer-

[1] The "dictation", supervision, and threat existed from the beginning. Also, we must point out in passing that the People's Commissars, and the members of the *Politburo* and other supreme organs, were never elected, but were appointed by the central committee of the Communist Party, influenced by the "genial *Vojd*", and validated by the Congress of Soviets, docile instrument of the central committee.

able agents of the omnipotent government. The committees, the "cells", and the other local party organs, "suggest" their ideas to the voters and impose their candidates. And there is only one list of the latter, presented by the Communist Party. There is no opposition. Who would dare to oppose this list or present another? And for what purpose would the voter "refuse to play" when such a gesture could change nothing in the situation but might lead the stubborn one to prison?

The vote is "free" and "secret" simply in the sense that the voter may manipulate his pen without anyone looking over his shoulder. But as to what that pen can put on the paper, there is no choice. His act is "pre-destined", therefore purely automatic. Thus the composition of the Soviets and their subordination to the Government are assured in advance. And the "ballot" is only another fraud.

We must remind the reader that the "Stalin Constitution" is the third since the October Revolution. The first, adopted by the Fifth Congress of Soviets in July, 1918, under Lenin, established the basis of the Bolshevik State. The second was adopted in 1924, still under Lenin. It made certain modifications and specifications which consolidated the power of the State, suppressing the last vestiges of the independence of the Soviets, the factory committees, et cetera. Finally, the third was granted by Stalin and adopted in 1936. The latter did not change anything. There were a few unimportant alterations of detail, a few vague promises, a few articles repeating "democratic" formulae, immediately contradicted by the articles which followed, and finally, the replacement of the annual Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets by a permanent superior Soviet, renewable every four years. That was all.

CHAPTER 6
General View

To complete the picture that I have just sketched, here are a few last brush strokes.

The Bolshevik system wants the State-employer to be, for every citizen, the provider, the moral guide, and the distributor of rewards and penalties.

The State provides work for the citizen and assigns him to a job. The State feeds and pays him! The State supervises him; the State uses and manipulates him as it likes; the State educates and trains him; the State judges him; the State recompenses or punishes him. So [in one embodiment we find] employer, provider, protector, supervisor, educator, instructor, judge, jailer, and executioner—all these [embodied] in a State, which, with the help of its functionaries, wants to be omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. Let him who seeks to escape it, beware!

We want to emphasize the point that the Bolshevik State (the Government) not only possesses all the material and moral goods in existence, but, what is perhaps, much more serious—it has made itself also the perpetual repository of all truth, in all fields, historic, economic, political, social, scientific, philosophical, and others. In all fields, the Bolshevik government considers itself infallible and called upon to lead humanity. It alone possesses the truth. It alone knows where and how to direct. It alone is capable of leading the Revolution properly.

Then, logically and inevitably, it claims that the 175,000,000 people who inhabit the Russian domain also must recognize it as the only bearer of the truth, infallible, incontrovertible, sacred. And logically, inevitably, any individual or group who dares not combat that government, but simply doubts its infallibility, criticizes it, contradicts it, or blames it for anything at all, is regarded as its enemy and therefore as an enemy of the truth, and of the Revolution—a "counter-revolutionary".

This involves a complete monopoly of *opinion and thought*. Any opinion, any thought, other than that of the State (or of the Government) is held to be a heresy: dangerous, inadmissible, criminal. And logically, inescapably, the punishment of heretics follows: prison, exile, execution.

The Syndicalists and the Anarchists, ferociously persecuted *solely because they dared to have an independent opinion of the Revolution,* knew what this meant.

As the reader can see, that system is truly that of *absolute slavery of the people*—physical and moral slavery. It is, if one likes, a new and terrible *Inquisition on a social level.* Such is the work achieved by the Bolshevik Party.

But did the Bolsheviki seek this result? Did they come to this deliberately?

Certainly not. Beyond doubt, the party's best representatives hoped for a system which would have permitted the building of real Socialism and would have opened the way of integral Communism. They were convinced that the methods preconceived by their great ideologists were going to lead there infallibly. Moreover, they believed that all means were good and justified, if they would lead to that goal.

They were deceived, those sincere ones. They took a false path. It was for this reason that some of them, perceiving the irreparable error and not wishing to survive their vanished hopes, committed suicide.

Naturally, the conformists and the careerists adapted themselves.

I must mention here an admission made to me, some years ago, by an eminent and sincere Bolshevik, in the course of a heated and passionate discussion. "Certainly," he said, "we have made mistakes and become involved in ways which we neither wished nor expected. But we will try to repair our errors and get out of the *impasse,* and regain the right road. And we will succeed."

On the contrary, one can be certain that they will not succeed. For the logical force of events, general human psychology, the linking of material factors, and the determined chain of causes and effects are, in the last analysis, more powerful than the will of a few individuals, no matter how strong and sincere they may be.

Ah, if millions of free men were deceived, if it was a question

of powerful collectives acting in full freedom, and in complete agreement, it might be possible by a common effort of will to repair the mistakes and redeem the situation. But such a task is impossible for a group of individuals placed above and outside the subjugated and passive human mass, confronted by gigantic forces which dominate them.

The Bolshevik Party seeks to build Socialism by means of the State, of a government, and of political action, centralized and authoritarian. But it can lead only to a monstrous and murderous State capitalism, based on the odious exploitation of the "mechanized", blind, unconscious masses.

The more it can be demonstrated that the leaders of the party were sincere, energetic, and capable, and that they were followed by vast masses, the better can the historical conclusion about their work be drawn. Thus:

Any attempt to achieve the Social Revolution with the help of a State, a government, and political action—even though that attempt is very sincere, very energetic, favored by circumstances, and supported by the masses—*will lead inevitably to State capitalism, the worst form of capitalism, which has absolutely nothing to do with the march of humanity toward a Socialist society.*

Such is the lesson for the world to be drawn from the tremendous and decisive Bolshevik experiment, a lesson which lends powerful support to the libertarian thesis, and which, in the light of events, will soon be understood by all those who labor, suffer, think, and struggle.

CHAPTER 7
Achievements

DESPITE THE numerous works and studies containing abundant documentation and irrefutable details of the pretense of "Soviet achievements", many persons continue to believe obstinately in this myth. For many such pretend to know and understand things without examining them closely, and without taking the trouble to read what has been published [about the questions before them].

Various naive individuals, with complete confidence in the statements made by partisans of the U.S.S.R., sincerely believe that the marvelous "achievements" of the only "Socialist State" prepare the ground for the coming of true and integral Communism.

But we who know that country, we who follow closely what is happening there, and what is revealed there, can appreciate the real value of the Bolshevik "conquests" and their "feats of valor" up to the present.

A profound and detailed analysis of that value is not our theme, but we must reply, at least briefly, to five pertinent and natural questions:

1. Does State capitalism, to which, according to the admissions of sincere Communists themselves, Bolshevism has led in Russia, achieve at least significant results from the purely industrial, agricultural, or cultural point of view?
2. Does it make progress in these fields?
3. Has it succeeded in giving an impetus to a country which was backward industrially, technologically, politically, and socially?
4. Could it, one day, by reason of the progress made, facilitate the social transformation and the transition to the Socialist society of tomorrow?
5. Can this State capitalism be regarded as a transitional stage [on the road] toward Socialism, an inevitable and indispensable stage in a country such as Russia was before the Revolution?

Many of [their defenders] contend that, under the existing conditions, the Bolsheviki did the maximum possible. By reason of the rudimentary state of industry, technology, and the general education of the masses, they aver, the only conceivable goal in this country was the installation in power of an intellectual elite which, by compulsion, would force the people to make up for the retardation, create a powerful industry, a modern technology, a progressive agriculture, and an exemplary educational system.

This task [the argument of the defenders continues] was the only one that could be attempted. And it was indispensable in Russia. The Bolsheviks were the only ones to understand this and to consecrate themselves resolutely to it, not stopping for any reason nor for any obstacle. And they were completely right in mercilessly sweeping away all those who might have interfered with that preparatory work. For the immediate future of the country and also that of Socialism in general depended on these necessary and urgent achievements.

The preceding chapters, we hope, give reason to reflect on the soundness of these assertions.

We complete our broad exposition with a few facts, figures and precise statements.

An excellent method for discovering *the real achievements* and *the real situation* of the Bolshevik State exists. But only if one knows the country, its history, its language, its customs, and especially only if one knows how to read the Soviet press. It is regrettable that, except under these essential conditions, such investigation is hardly practicable outside of Russia.

This method is that of scanning regularly the newspapers which appear in Russia, particularly *Izvestia* and *Pravda*.

The Bolshevik government knows very well that, except in a few instances, these papers are not being read abroad. Counting, on the one hand, upon ignorance of what is really happening in the U.S.S.R., and on the other hand, upon the effects of its immense and intensive propaganda, the Stalin régime feels itself amply protected from inopportune revelations. Forced to admit and explain certain weaknesses to its own population, it may do it in full security. Therefore it tolerates certain admissions in its news-

papers, while controlling, naturally, their object, their appearance, and their scope.

From admission to admission, the regular and attentive reader of the Soviet press inevitably reaches enlightening conclusions.

In studying the Russian newspapers, the following features especially should occupy the attention of the researcher:

1. Editorials.
2. Reports of congresses, and particularly the delegates' speeches.
3. Local reportage and correspondence.
4. Summaries.

The editorials and principal articles, written to order and always developed according to the same model, have for years assumed the same invariable character.

Each article begins with a hymn to "achievements" effected. In such and such a field, it asserts, as a rule, we have made giant strides. Everything is going marvelously. "The Party and the Government" (a sacred formula, repeated many times in each article) have made such and such a decision, have applied such and such a measure, or promulgated such and such a decree. Therefore we are sure (it slips imperceptibly into the future tense) that, from now on, this or that *will be done;* that, in the very near future, such and such progress *will be made;* that directly such and such a result *will be achieved,* et cetera.

This part makes up two thirds of the article. Then unfailingly comes a "but", a "however", or a "nevertheless".

But, the article continues, the Party and the Government are obliged to state that, according to the latest reports received, the present achievements are still far from attaining the necessary results; that, at present, only this or that has been done. And there follow figures and data in astonishing disproportion to the forecasts.

The further you read, the more you realize that while the future is going to be splendid the actual present is deplorable; negligence, serious errors, weaknesses, impotence, disorder, confusion are usually cited in such an article. And it is sure to continue with desperate appeals: "Forward! Faster! It is necessary that we regain control of ourselves! It is high time that

production increased! Less waste! Let those responsible be called to order! The Party and the Government have done their duty. It is up to the workers to do theirs, et cetera." Often, too, the article concludes with threats against the unfortunate "responsible parties" and those who remain deaf to the appeals of the Party and the Government in general.

Nothing is more typical of the Soviet press than this aspect. It has been repeated day after day for 20 years.

Reports of the congresses [of the various divisions of the U.S.S.R. political system] are notably edifying if one takes the trouble to scan closely the speeches of the delegates.

All those delegates of course belong to the privileged working-class "aristocracy". All these speeches resemble one another like drops of water.

Each speech begins with an immoderate glorification of Stalin: the great, the genial, the well-loved, the venerated, the superman, the wisest man of all peoples and all centuries. Then each delegate declares that in his region—or his field—unheard-of efforts are being made to fulfil the orders of the Party and the Government, and to please the adored *Vodj*. Then they hold out beautiful promises for the future. Finally, they nearly all servilely enumerate all that the Party and the Government have already done "for the workers". By way of example, the delegate usually cites his own case.

This part of the speech is generally the most curious. Working zealously, and having scored these results, the delegate says, he has been able to win such and such an advancement, which has enabled him now to have a stylish home, nice furniture, a phonograph, a piano, et cetera. And he hopes to do still better in order to attain a way of life even more agreeable.

"He is eminently right, our great Stalin," the delegate cries. "Life in the U.S.S.R. is becoming happier, more comfortable every day." Frequently he concludes his speech on a note that is naive to the point of absurdity: "The authorities have promised me, as a recompense for my efforts, this or that (a fine bicycle, for instance). The promise has not yet been kept, but I am waiting patiently, with confidence in my government . . . " (Prolonged applause from the congress).

The purpose of these speeches, deliberately inspired, is clear.

They say to the workers: "Work with zeal, obey the authorities, venerate your *Vodj*, and you will manage to rise from the herd, and create for yourself a genteel, bourgeois existence."

And this propaganda bears fruit. The desire to "rise" stimulates the energies of thousands of individuals in the "Soviet" Union. The example of those who "rise" redoubles this energy. The dominant caste makes its profit. But Socialism? Have patience, poor dupes.

And the reporting, local correspondence, and summaries enable us to get an approximate and suggestive idea of a multitude of daily facts, of those "little nothings" which in reality compose and characterize existence.

At the end of such a study, one becomes sufficiently clear about the social level and real spirit of "the first Socialist country". Naturally, of course, the study of this documentation must be completed by the reader with the scanning of magazine articles, statistics, et cetera.

What, then, are our conclusions about the concrete achievements in the U.S.S.R.?

Ahead of everything else, there exists a field in which the "Soviet" power has beaten all records—that of propaganda: more precisely, that of lying, deception, and bluff.

In this field the Bolsheviks have revealed themselves as past masters.[1] Commanding all avenues of information, publicity, [and communication], they have, on the one hand, surrounded the country with a veritable protective wall across which they allow to pass only what corresponds to their plans, and, on the other hand, they utilize every possible means to maintain an incredibly powerful enterprise of imposture, trickery, stage setting, and mystification.

This deceitful propaganda all over the world is of a scope and intensity without equal. Considerable sums of money are devoted to it. Throwing dust into the eyes [of other peoples] is one of the principal tasks of the Bolshevik State. Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books, photographs, moving pictures, radio, expositions, demonstrations, "testimonies"—all methods, one more tricky than the next—are employed.

[1] Compared to them, the Nazis are only modest pupils and imitators.

Undeniably, the "Soviet" government makes large use of direct or indirect subsidies abroad. Among the "Friends of the Soviet Union", for example, there are writers who are "friends" primarily because this title permits them to sell their literary output in the U.S.S.R. or to gain other advantages.

But propaganda by word having proved insufficient, the Bolshevik government has masterfully organized *deception through fact.*

No one may enter the Russian domain without special authorization, which is exceedingly difficult to obtain, unless one gives certain guarantees of sympathy for the régime. No one can travel through the country freely, nor examine independently what interests him. On the other hand, the Government has patiently and meticulously set up a showy façade. It has rigged up a great display of promises to show to the dazzled world. It sets up this scaffolding on every occasion. The "workers' delegations", authorized to spend a few weeks in Russia from time to time, and abominably duped (if their members are sincere), serve its purpose. And the same is true of the overwhelming majority of "tourists" or isolated visitors who travel in that country under the vigilant eye of spies, without being able to understand what is really going on around them.

Factories, collective farms, museums, canteens, and parks for sport, play, and rest are all prepared in advance, in special places, and tricked out in such a way that the poor traveler remains dumbfounded without becoming aware of the imposition. And even when he sees something really good or beautiful, he does not realize that it concerns only the 10,000,000 privileged persons and not at all the 160,000,000 exploited proletarians.

If the bourgeoisie of other countries also have recourse to "window dressing", Bolshevism uses "super-window dressing", so that in our times still, and despite the testimony of sincere witnesses, millions of workers in all the other lands do not know the truth about the U.S.S.R.

Let us pass on to other achievements.

Here we shall deal with the bureaucracy, the new bourgeoisie, the Army, and the police.

We already know that the Bolshevik State has succeeded in developing with dizzying speed a tremendous bureaucracy, un-

equaled and incomparable, a bureaucracy which alone forms today a privileged "aristocratic" caste of more than 2,000,000 individuals. It has succeeded also in dividing the population of the "Socialist" State into at least 20 categories of wage-earners. And they have reached an inequality of social conditions never before existent in private capitalist States. The lowest categories receive from 100 to 150 *rubles* a month. The higher categories receive 3,000 *rubles* and more.

The "Soviet" Union includes a State *bourgeoisie*, a *bourgeoisie* which lives luxuriously, possessing sumptuous villas, with carriages, and servants, et cetera.

The Bolshevik State has militarized the ranks of the directing party itself, by forming, especially from among the Bolshevist youth a "special Army corps", a sort of State police. And it was with the help of such a special corps that the Lenin government stamped out the revolutionary uprising in Kronstadt in 1921, and with the same aid, the Stalin régime pitilessly drowns in blood the strikes, demonstrations, and revolts which occur in the country from time to time, but of which, naturally, the Bolshevik press does not breathe a word.

Such as it was—chained, castrated, bureaucratized, bourgeoisified, regimented, corrupted, and petrified—the Russian Revolution, as we have said, was powerless to impose itself upon the world. The Bolsheviki ended by realizing this. They understood, too, that under these conditions, they almost inevitably, soon or late, would have to do so with the same method that served them in imposing themselves upon Russia—armed violence.

From then on, they applied themselves relentlessly to the forging of the indispensable instrument of this method: a powerful modern army. Their mining production and their heavy industry particularly were brought into play to carry out this project. The task was achieved to a certain extent. They ended by creating a regular army, patterned after all the armies in the world, mechanically disciplined, blindly devoted to the Power, secured by ranks and decorations, well fed, well dressed, and equipped with the "last word" in *materiel*. This army has become an imposing force.

Finally, Bolshevism knew how to form a powerful police force, partly regular, but primarily secret, a police force which is perhaps the best in the world, since it has succeeded up to now,

in keeping down a subjugated, deceived, exploited, and impoverished population. *It has known how, especially, to raise spying to the level of a civic virtue.* Every member of the Communist Party —even every loyal citizen—is expected to help the G.P.U., to point out suspicious cases to it, to spy, to denounce.

In the last analysis, the Bolshevik power has succeeded in reducing to complete slavery 160,000,000 individuals, for the purpose of leading them one day—by an infallible method, it claims—to freedom, prosperity, and real Communism. Meanwhile, with its administration wholly bureaucratized, with its economy totally nationalized, and with its professional army and its omnipotent police, *this power has managed to create a bureaucratic, military, and police State par excellence, a model of a totalitarian State;* an incomparable dominating and exploiting mechanism; a real capitalist State.

All these "feats of valor" and "achievements" are undeniable. What can be said of the others?

BEFORE WE do anything else, we must establish, unequivocally, that, according to the admissions of the Bolshevik authorities themselves, admissions which were forced, indirect, but adequately precise, *the* [*carrying out of*] *the three greatest tasks of the Russian capitalist State have been a complete fiasco.* Those tasks were:

1. The famous "industrialization" of the country.
2. The celebrated "five-year plans".
3. The tremendous "collectivization of agriculture".

To be sure, they have imported into the U.S.S.R. an imposing array of machines, apparatuses, and equipment of all kinds. They have erected modern houses in certain large cities, and in certain places, workers' homes, which, however, are very badly built. They have achieved, with the help of foreign engineers and technicians, a few gigantic constructions such as the Dnieprostroi dam, the Magnitogorsk furnaces, the vast Sverdlovsk machine works, and the famous Bielooserski canal. Finally, they have resumed—after a stoppage due to the years of stress—mining exploitation, the production of oil, and the regular functioning of factories. But any régime or nation would have done this under penalty of disappear-

ing [if it did not].

For us the problem has an entirely different meaning. In all that has been accomplished by the Bolshevik State, can one see real achievements that are of interest from our point of view? Can one observe a real general progress of the nation, a progress which puts it on the road to the emancipation, both social and cultural, of the laboring masses, on the road to Socialism, to [real] Communism? Does the activity of the Bolshevik government create in the country an indispensable condition for such an evolution? Has it really achieved a rough sketch of a new society? That sums up the whole problem.

The industrialization of a country can be really productive and progressive only if harmonized with its general and natural development. And such industrialization can be useful socially only if it is in harmony with the whole economic life of the nation, and if, consequently, its effects can be usefully assimilated by the population. In the contrary case, it may lead to impressive, but socially useless, building.

One can erect all that one wishes when one possesses certain means and especially if there can be recourse to enslaved labor, submissive to the commands of the State-employer, and paid by the latter as it sees fit. The [solution of the] problem, however, does not consist of effecting mechanical achievements but of being able to put them at the service of the goal pursued.

A forced industrialization, imposed upon a population which is not prepared for it from any point of view, cannot fulfil this necessary rôle. To want to industrialize from above a country with a labor populace which is only a downtrodden, inert, miserable herd, is to want to industrialize a desert.

In order that a country be industrialized effectively, it must possess one of two essential elements: either an energetic, powerful, and rich *bourgeoisie* or a population that is master of its own fate —that is to say free, conscious of its needs and of its acts, desirous of progress, and determined to organize itself to attain it. In the first case, the bourgeoisie must command a market capable of rapidly absorbing the output of industrialization. In the second, this assimilation and the industrialization are assured by the powerful enthusiasm of the whole population on the march toward

The bourgeoisie at work.

progress.

The Russian Revolution suppressed the *bourgeoisie*. The first condition, therefore, did not exist at that time. The second remained. It was necessary to give free scope to the collective evolution of a people of 170,000,000 individuals, *a people spontaneously ready to accomplish a tremendous social experiment*: to build a society on an absolutely new basis, not capitalist and not statist. *It was necessary, simply, to help* that people to achieve the experiment.

Immense technical progress being an accomplished fact in the world, and a rapid industrialization and an abundance of products also being, in our time, materially possible, there were no insurmountable obstacles that a powerful human collectivity, carried away by a prodigious ardor, and aided by all the mature forces available, could not have overcome and have reached the desired goal. Who knows what the world would be like today if this course had been followed?

But the Bolshevik Party was completely unaware of that task. Having seized the vacant throne, it wanted to substitute itself for the ousted *bourgeoisie* and the free creative mass. It suppressed both conditions to replace them with a third: *dictatorial power*, which stifled the real breath of the Revolution—the boundless enthusiasm of millions of human beings for the cause—which dried up all the living sources of real progress, and barred the way to the effective evolution of society. The result of such an error was inevitable: "mechanism", a mechanism without life, without soul, without creativity.

We know today, on the basis of exact and irrefutable data, that, except for the military sector, the Bolshevik "industrialism" led, in the overwhelming majority of cases, to all sorts of sterile installations and constructions, especially in so far as the real, economic, social, and cultural progress of a people was concerned.

We know that 75 per cent. of all these huge buildings remain without purpose, and either do not function at all or function badly.

We know that the thousands of machines imported from abroad are for the most part rapidly put out of commission, abandoned, or lost.

We know that the present labor force in the U.S.S.R., a labor force that is only a herd of slaves working reluctantly and in a brutalized way for the profit of the State-employer, does not know how to handle those machines, nor how to use them, and finally, that the population does not get any benefit from them. Only the equipment of the Army has been improved, to a certain extent.

We know that the people—160,000,000 individuals out of 170,000,000—live in terrible conditions of poverty and moral brutalization.

The pretended "industrialization" of the U.S.S.R. is not a praiseworthy accomplishment. It is not an "achievement of the Socialist State", but *a State-capitalist enterprise,* forced, after the failure of "war Communism" and then of the N.E.P., to play its last card. That consists of deluding its own subjects, and also the people of other countries, by the fictitious and illusory grandeur of its projects, in the hope of maintaining itself "until better times".

The "industrialization" of the U.S.S.R. is just a bluff, nothing more. Likewise the "five-year plans" are nothing but an immense bluff, following that of the "industrialization". On the basis of precise facts and figures, we hold that these plans have been a total failure. This is beginning to be recognized almost everywhere.

As for the "collectivization", we already have said enough about that. The reader has seen what it represents in reality. We repeat that such "collectivization" can never be the real solution of the agrarian problem. It is far from being Socialist, or even a social, achievement. It is a system of useless and absolutely sterile violence. We contend that the peasant will be won over to the cause of the Social Revolution only by means which have nothing in common with this return to medieval serfdom, in which the feudal lord is replaced by the State lord.

Could one construct, let us say, not Socialism, but simply a healthy and progressive economy, on such a basis?

Let us look at a few facts and figures concerning the five-year plans.

In 1939 the U.S.S.R. announced the results of the third five-

year period.

Through the run of the first two such periods, the Soviet press complained unceasingly of considerable delays in the execution of the plans. Extraction of coal and other minerals, exploitation of oil wells, metallurgical production, textile production, the progress of heavy industry and all other industries, extension of railroads and improvement of their rolling stock—in short, economic activity in all fields was greatly below the quotas and the forecasts. Passing from one five-year period to another, [the various industries] remained far behind the results expected.

The genial dictator raged, arrested, executed.

But *Izvestia* was forced to admit, indirectly, in a series of articles (appearing in August-November, 1939), the failure of the [economic plan for the] third period. That journal stated that steel and iron production in October, 1939, was below that of October, 1938; that the output of all the branches of the metallurgical industries had fallen off; and that several blast furnaces had to be shut down for lack of coal and metal.

The situation became critical to such a point that at the end of September the Soviet press ceased to report the monthly figures.

According to the data published in that press, the locomotive works, in the course of the first two five-year plans, realized only 50 per cent. of their quotas. The number of freight cars was increased by a number greatly below the official forecast. The fabulous enterprises such as Dnieprostroi and Magnitogorsk functioned badly. Several of those enterprises underwent long stretches of enforced inactivity. The gigantic projects of electrification were achieved only to an insignificant degree.

The People's Commissar, Kossyguin, declared in May, 1939, that the country's textile enterprises were poorly equipped and technically inadequate to operate at the necessary level of production. And he complained of a lack of contact between the textile industry on the one hand, and the producers of raw material on the other.

"The textile enterprises do not receive enough linen, hemp, or wool. Yet great quantities of flax rot in the fields. The hemp harvest waits indefinitely to be made into thread. And as for wool, the elementary rules of sorting and cleaning are neglected

in its preparation, which greatly handicaps the making of cloth. And one may say the same thing about the preparation of silk cocoons."

Thus one could cover pages and pages with precise facts and figures, appearing in the Bolshevik press, and pertaining to all fields, to prove incontestably the failure of the five-year plans.

In describing the lamentable condition of all the Soviet industries, one has an embarrassment of choices.

According to the admissions of *Izvestia* (in several of its issues in January, 1940) the coal mining industry doesn't know how to use the new machines. That is one of the reasons for the insufficient output.

The Bolshevik papers of July 30, 1939, were given over largely to *Railroad Transport Day*. Admissions therein are exceptionally edifying. [Some of them follow].

Generally, rails are supplied by the [plants] in very inadequate numbers, and their quality is bad. Four big plants make rails in the U.S.S.R. For some time they have stopped making rails of first quality. So the railroads must be content with those of second or third class. But of these up to 20 per cent. are unusable.

When tracks were being repaired in July, 1939, the great Kuznetski works suddenly stopped all delivery of rails. The reason? Lack of equipment for boring holes. And in general, indispensable spare parts for repair work were not sent out, which held up all such work.

Three huge plants which make various parts for railroads very often interrupt delivery because of lack of steel, of tools, or for other reasons. One case was cited where a plant was short only 180 *poods* (three and a quarter tons) of metal. Nevertheless, all deliveries were held up, and the railroads were short 1,000,000 repair parts.

Frequently, too, the plants deliver certain parts, and neglect to provide others, equally indispensable. The rails are on hand, but they rust away and deteriorate for lack of fishplates, for example.

The authorities have raged in vain. The Government has sent out an S.O.S. call and fixed "responsibility" in vain. All these

measures remain ineffective and the official reports are compelled to state, from time to time, that one of the reasons for all those deficiencies is *"the absence of all interest, of all spirit, among the laboring masses"*. According to admissions by competent agencies, the indifference of the workers approaches sabotage. And they also speak of "excessive centralization", of "bureaucracy", of "general negligence".

But to talk doesn't mean to remedy. No remedy exists. Instead, it is necessary to condemn the whole system.

According to other admissions by the Bolshevik press, the extraction of all minerals as well as of naphtha suffers from lack of organization. Output in these fields remain low, despite the use of machines (which are frequently in very bad condition), and despite all official measures. *Pravda,* in certain issues in December, 1939, stated that coal production in the Urals was steadily falling. And about the same time the papers complained of an inextricable mess in the chemical industry.

Elsewhere we learn that the "Red Proletariat" plant, which, *Pravda* says, is in the advance guard of the metallurgical industry, manages to produce only 40 per cent. of its quota, "because of great technical and administrative disorder".

We could continue citing examples into infinity.

In all fields, the industrial situation in the U.S.S.R. has always been lamentable, and remains so in our day. *Industrialization is only a myth. There are machines, but there is no industrialization.*

Concerning the "collectivization", one could cite volumes with illuminating data taken from the Soviet press.

We will simply cite a few facts, culled at random from the Russian papers.

Dealing with the harvest of 1939, *Socialist Agriculture* for August 8 states that everywhere work is very much delayed, and often to the endangerment of the crops. In places, too, the harvest is nearly non-existent. According to the agricultural section of the Communist Party's central committee, the main reason for this is *insufficiency of technical means,* due, in its turn, to *negligence, disorganization, heedlessness, and delays of all sorts.* For instance, the indispensable parts for machines in use do not arrive in time,

or come in inadequate quantities.

Erection of repair shops is greatly behind schedule everywhere. For example, a center which contracted to build 300 workshops by a certain date, completed only 14. Another built only eight out of 353 promised. And in the Kursk district only three repair shops out of 91 planned have been completed.

Moreover, the same periodical explains, the harvest work this year (1939) is in difficulties because great quantities of wheat have been battered down by inclement weather. And instructions about adapting the machines to thresh fallen wheat are always lacking.

Finally, the agrarian paper continues, the force of skilled harvest workers has been considerably diminished this year because, in many places, the machine operators and mechanics have not yet been paid for last year. Why? The answer is that these workers are paid only after the *kolkhoz* has paid its taxes. And in many places those taxes are yet to be paid.

Izvestia and *Socialist Agriculture* both said that in 1939, because of all these mishaps, 64,000,000 hectares of wheat less than in 1938 would be harvested by August 1. [1]

The Soviet press in November, 1939, complained of considerable delays in the harvesting of potatoes and other vegetables. This was laid to lack of men and horses, inadequate deliveries of gasoline, and especially to negligence by the *kolkhozniki* (members of the co-operative).

Izvestia for November 4 admitted that by October 25 the *sovkhoz* had made only 67 per cent. of their obligatory grain deliveries; that the *kolkhozes* had fulfilled only 59 per cent. of their mandatory payments; and that, by the same date, only 34 per cent. of the quota of potatoes and 63 per cent. of other vegetables had been supplied by the *kolkhozes* to the State.

In July, 1939, a Congress of State Cattle Breeders in the Ukraine reported: 1. That there were then many *kolkhozes* without any cattle (45 per cent. in Khirguisie, 62 per cent. in Tadjiki, 17 per cent. in the Ryazin district, 11 per cent. in that of Kirovsk, and

[1] A *hectare* is equivalent to 2.471 acres. Which means that the shortage of wheat in the U.S.S.R. in 1939 was estimated at 158,144,000 acres.

34 per cent. in the Ukraine); 2. That a great many *kolkhozes* possessed an insufficient number of cattle, and that, in the Ukraine, nearly 50 per cent. of those collective farms had less than 10 cows each ("only just enough so that one can smell a cow a little" the reporter jokes); 3. That, in general, the number of head of cattle has greatly diminished in the U.S.S.R. since the collectivization.

And the most curious thing is that, as everywhere else, no really frank, practical, and effective measure can be devised. Need one continue?

These facts, these admissions, and these complaints have prevailed for 20 years. And in many other fields in the "Soviet" Union, one could also pursue this enumeration into infinity.

In the U.S.S.R. those circumstances are given notable attention. One conforms the necessary extent to the requirements of the authorities, and—"one gets on as best one can".

Abroad, until recently, nothing of this was known. Now the truth begins to be revealed . . . .

The latest measures taken by the Bolshevik government to stimulate the activity of the *kolkhozes* are typical.

In the summer of 1939 certain official literature, for example, *The Constructive Work of The Party, No.* 10, asserted that the essential evil of the Soviet system was "the slight interest of the farmer in doing high quality work and in obtaining good harvests". Inspired from above, the press got busy on this subject.

And in January, 1940, *Izvestia* declared that "the Party and the Government" had made a decision to enhance the economic interest of the collective farmers. Toward that end, it explained, "each collective farmer must be assured that any increase in the harvest effected by him will remain at the disposal of the *kolkhoz* and serve to improve its economy." (This had not been the case previously). And it added that it was exceedingly important to "develop the creative initiative of the mass of collective farmers."

Finally, in a decree dated January 18, 1940, the Party's central committee and the Council of People's Commissars accorded the *kolkhozes* a certain amount of economic independence. Each *kolkhoz* was given the right to establish its own crop plan—which, naturally, must always be "validated by the official authorities".

Obviously it is unnecessary to point out that that sort of

collective farm N.E.P. will come to nothing. It is only a maneuver of the Stalinist régime due primarily to its reverses in the Finnish War, and practically negated by the whole situation. Moreover, the peasant mass is fully aware of this machination; it received the "reform" with utter indifference.

We have touched upon it here because it shows the true nature of Bolshevist "collectivization".

In general this pretended, forced, "collectivization", undertaken for the purpose of subjugating the peasants completely to the State and representing a new form of serfdom, cracked in all its parts. What we have just seen leaves no doubt on that score.

And the Soviet press is compelled to insist more and more upon the seriousness of the struggle between the "individual sector" and the "socialist sector" in the agriculture of the U.S.S.R. The latter is neglected, abandoned, and openly sabotaged by the peasants on the slightest pretext and by a thousand methods. Finally, the situation is regarded as being "exceedingly serious". The few seeming concessions are attempts to awaken in the collective farmers an interest in their *kolkhozes* and to combat the tendencies contrary to that interest.

But there cannot be the slightest question that these attempts will fail. The struggle of the peasants against serfdom will continue.

HAVING DEALT with the material side of the U.S.S.R. story—the economic, industrial, and technical aspects—let us look at certain other fields which may be called *spiritual.*

Three points need special clarification:

1. The problem of educating the people.
2. The emancipation of women.
3. The religious problem.

I regret that I am not able to dwell at length on each of these topics. But such a task would require too much space, and is not the purpose of this work. So I shall confine myself to establishing certain essential characteristics.

For years the ignorant and the interested have pretended that, having found the Russian domain in a state of complete, almost "savage", ignorance, the Bolsheviki have made "giant strides" on

the road of general culture, training, and education. Foreign travelers, having visited one large Russian city or another, tell us of marvels that they have seen "with their own eyes".

Have I not heard it stated, with the utmost assurance, that before the Bolsheviks stepped in "there were hardly any public schools in Russia," and that today "there are splendid ones nearly everywhere there"? Have I not heard it said by a lecturer that "before the Revolution there were only two or three universities in the country and that the Bolsheviks have created several"? Do they not say that before the Bolsheviks nearly all the Russian people did not know how to read or write and that now such total illiteracy has almost disappeared? Do they not say—I mention it only as an example of the ignorance and false assertions concerning Russia—do they not say that under the Tsars the [industrial] workers and peasants were forbidden by law to receive secondary and higher education?

As for the travelers, it is true that they can observe and even admire, in the larger cities of the U.S.S.R., some beautiful modern schools, well equipped and well organized—in the first place, because such model schools are fixtures in all the great cities of the world (a visitor could have made the same observation in Tsarist Russia); in the second place, because the installation of such schools is part of the decorative and demonstrative program of the Bolshevik government.

But it is clear that the situation in a few large cities proves nothing about the conditions in the countryside, especially in a land as vast as the "Soviet" Union. A traveler there who wanted to arrive at conclusions based on the truth would have to see things and follow their development from day to day, for at least several weeks, in the depths of the country, in various small cities, in the villages, on the collective farms, and in factories far from the great centers. But what traveler who may have had such an idea has been able to obtain authorization to do anything about it? As for the myths of the sort just described, we already have shown their real worth in other parts of this work.

No one contends that the training and education of the Russian people was sufficiently widespread prior to the Revolution. (Indeed, it was not adequate in any country. There was merely a difference of details and shades). No one claims that the number

of persons who couldn't read or write in Tsarist Russia was not very large and that popular instruction there was not very backward in comparison to certain Western nations, but between that and the statements I have just quoted there is a considerable gap.

It is fairly simple, however, to establish the exact truth.

Before the Revolution the network of primary, secondary, and higher schools in Russia was already fairly impressive, although not adequate. It was primarily the teaching which was defective: the programs, methods, and means were lamentable. Naturally, the Government was unconcerned with the real education of the people. As for the municipal and private schools, supervised by the [Romanov] authorities, and compelled to follow the official curriculum, they could not accomplish much, though they did effect some achievements.

But the purported "enormous progress" of the Bolshevik régime [in the educational field] actually was mediocre. To be convinced of this it suffices, as in other matters, to follow the official Soviet press closely. As elsewhere, its lamentations and admissions on this theme, for years, have been highly eloquent.

Let us examine a few more or less recent citations:

According to the general declarations and official figures, teaching in the U.S.S.R. is going forward in a more than satisfactory manner. The number of pupils in the primary and secondary schools attained, in 1935-36, the imposing figure of 25,000,000; the number of students in the higher schools was raised to 520,000. In 1936-37 the respective figures were 28,000,000 and 560,000. Finally, in 1939,[1] the score was 29,700,000 and 600,000. Nearly 1,000,000 students received technical training—industrial, commercial, agricultural, et cetera. The courses for adults throughout the country were numerous. And desire for education was intense.

Of course it is natural that a government arising from a revolution and pretending to be popular would try to satisfy the aspirations of the people for a good education. It is normal that this régime should submit the national educational system to fundamental reforms. Any post-revolutionary government would have

[1] *Pravda* for May 31.

done as much.

But in judging the work of the Bolshevik government intelligently, the official quantitative figures are not enough. *The real problem is how to discover what the quality and the value of this new education is.* It is necessary to question whether that govevnment has succeeded in organizing education to assure good, serious, valuable, and solid training. And it is essential to know whether the training and education in the U.S.S.R. are capable of developing men who can create a new life, militants for Socialist activity.

To these fundamental questions the Soviet press itself, by its admissions through the years, has replied in the negative.

First, we must state that education in the Russian domain is not adequate for everyone. In fact, *higher education is not free.*[1] The majority of students [in the higher schools] are on State scholarships. And the others? A sizeable number of youths are deprived of higher education, which thus becomes a privilege depending upon the pleasure of the Government. And there are other defects much more serious.

For years the same statements and complaints [about education] have repeatedly appeared in the columns of the Soviet newspapers, notably these:

1. The Government has not yet succeeded in producing a sufficient quantity of school books. The bureaucracy, centralism, administrative slowness, et cetera, prevent it. (The president of the directing committee of the higher schools, a certain Kaftanov, had to admit in a speech [2] that the higher schools were completely without text-books. A small quantity was finally published in 1939, but a goodly part of these were merely reprints of pre-revolutionary volumes).

2. The same complaint, from year to year, about school equipment. Its scarcity, or its exceedingly bad quality, seriously impedes the work of education.

[1] See Stalin Constitution, Article 125.

[2] *Pravda,* May 31, 1939.

3. The number of school buildings is [appallingly] insufficient. It increases very slowly, which creates a grave obstacle to real educational progress. And the existing edifices are in a wretchedly bad state, and those newly constructed—always in haste and carelessly—are defective and rapidly deteriorate.

However, the defects mentioned are not the most important.

A much more profound evil paralyzes the work of education in the U.S.S.R.—*the lack of teachers and professors.*

Ever since 1935 *Izvestia, Pravda,* and other Soviet journals have abounded in admissions and tears in connection with this subject. According to those admissions, the organization of a teaching force does not at all correspond to the country's needs. In 1937, for instance, only 50 per cent. of "the plan" for teachers was fulfilled.

Hundreds and sometimes thousands of teachers are lacking in some districts. But that is not all. Those who exercise the teaching function are far from being duly qualified. Thus about two thirds of the secondary school teachers have not had a university training. Likewise two thirds of the elementary teachers lack secondary education.

The Soviet press complains bitterly of the crass ignorance of the teachers, and cites numerous astounding examples of their incompetence and ineptness.

To sum up—in reality, training and education in the U.S.S.R. are in a lamentable state. Outside of the great cities and the artificial façade, there are not enough schools, teachers, equipment, or text books. The school buildings lack elementary facilities for hygiene and often lack heating. In the depths of the country, popular education is in a state of incredible abandonment. It amounts to absolute chaos.

Under these conditions are not the pretended "90 per cent. of the population" who are more or less literate simply another myth?

The Soviet press itself answers this question. From year to year it speaks of the absence of the most elementary education, and of a very low cultural level, not only among the masses of people, but among the student youth, teachers, and professors.

All efforts of the Government to remedy this state of affairs

have not succeeded. The general circumstances, the very basis of the Bolshevik system, constitute insurmountable obstacles to any effective improvement of the situation. The whole tendency of the Russian educational set-up prevents its success. For it disseminates propaganda, rather than providing education or training. It fills the heads of the students with the rigid doctrines of Bolshevism and Marxism. *No initiative, no critical spirit, no freedom to doubt or to examine, is tolerated.*

All education in the U.S.S.R. is permeated with a scholastic spirit: moribund, dull, curdled. The general lack of freedom of opinion, the absence of all independent action or discussion, and therefore the absence of all exchange of ideas in a land where only the Marxist dogma is allowed—all this prevents the people from getting any real education.

The travelers—observers necessarily superficial, and often naive—admire the cultural and sport institutions which they have seen "with their own eyes" during a few quick official visits to Moscow, Leningrad, and two or three other cities.

But note what we find in the journal *Trud*: [1]

The miners of the Donetz Basin put the following questions to the governmental authorities there: "What is the use of the levies made on our wages for the purpose of maintaining the 'Palace of Culture' in Gorlovka?" [2] (The fact that this protest was published was a rare circumstance).

In 1939 (the miners declared) the cost of maintaining that institution reached several million *rubles.* The budget of the "Miners' Club" alone amounted to 1,173,000 *rubles.* Out of this sum, 700,000 were paid to the motion picture industry for the rental of films which no one came to see because of their bad quality. The other 400,000 *rubles* went for maintenance of the personnel. As for the miners, they did not profit at all from the money they were obliged to pay out.

The "Palace of Culture", (the miners' complaint continues), is surrounded by a garden solemnly called "the Park". A con-

[1] No. 168, July, 1939.

[2] Gorlovka is an industrial locality in that basin.

siderable sum of money has been deducted from their wages to fix up this garden. With that money a huge entrance gate has been erected, a gate flanked by several concrete turrets. But [those in charge of the project] forgot to build a wall around the garden. The garden is there with its luxurious entrance, but without a wall. No one profits from it, for it is in a state of abandonment.

Also "they" have erected a theater, a platform, a shooting gallery, even a bathing place. But none of these installations function for the miners. They are there only to show the latter the ease with which the responsible officers of workers' organizations waste the money of the workers. These officers have laid out for themselves a little garden, a private corner called "the Garden of the Miners' Committee". But the miners themselves—the workers who paid for the "Palace", the "Club", the "Park", and the "Garden of the Miners' Committee"—they have only the dusty streets of Gorlovka at their disposal.

By a [seeming] miracle, this complaint found its way into the columns of *Trud*. One must suppose that for some reason the authorities could not refuse this publicity to the miners, and that it had been decided in high places to right their complaint and apply penalties. But it is certain that for one such case publicized, thousands of others remain unknown.

A stifling dogmatism, absence of all individual life, of all free spirit, of all moral enthusiasm; a lack of vast and passionate perspectives; the rule of the barracks spirit, of a suffocating bureaucracy, of flat servility and careerism; desperate monotony of an empty and colorless existence, regulated in even the slightest details by the mandates of the State—such are characteristics of education and "culture" in the U.S.S.R.

Who can be astonished that, according to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Young Communist Truth),[1] a profound disillusionment and a spirit of "dangerous" boredom have invaded the ranks of that country's student youth? Their whole environment exercises a depressing influence on the young.

And according to certain admissions in the Soviet press, a great number of the students attend their courses only because of compulsion, and with no real interest in them. Many of them

[1] October 20, 1936.

pass their nights playing cards.

The following lines were found in the diary of a young student:

"I am bored. I am terribly bored. Nothing significant or remarkable, neither among men or events. What am I waiting for? Good, I will complete my course. Good, I will be an engineer. I will have two rooms, a stupid wife, an intelligent brat, and 500 *rubles* a month salary. Two meetings a month. And then? . . . When I ask myself if I would feel any regret about leaving this life, I answer: No, I shall leave it without great regret."

Much noise has been made about "the emancipation of women by the Bolsheviks". Real equality of the sexes, abolition of legal marriage, freedom of women to dispose of their bodies, and the right to abortion—all these "beneficences" have been sung and glorified by the advance-guard press of all the nations.

These "achievements" also belong to the realm of myths. The reader knows that ideas about the equality and freedom of the sexes, with all of the practical consequences, were harbored a long time ago—long before the Revolution—by the advanced Russian circles. Any government stemming from the Revolution was obliged to take account of and sanction that state of affairs.

So there was nothing specifically Bolshevik in this development. The attainments of the Bolshevik government actually occupy only a very modest place. Incontestably that régime wanted to apply the principles enunciated. But again, the essential question is: *Did it succeed*? And again, we could fill pages—supported by documented facts—to demonstrate that it has failed lamentably, and that its own system, with its practical consequences, has compelled it to let everything go, to retreat, to retain only the myth and the bluff.

Legal marriage has *not* been abolished in the U.S.S.R. Instead, it has been simplified, or, rather, it has become civil, while before the Revolution it was compulsorily religious. It must even be noted that divorce, which, while civil, is regulated by a series of pecuniary conditions and penal measures.[1]

[1] See *Izvestia*, June 28, 1936.

Examining the marriage registry, one finds a large proportion of weddings concluded between very young women and old but highly placed men. This proves that in the U.S.S.R., as everywhere else, and more so, marriage is a "business", and not a free union of love, as the Bolsheviki would have it believed. And that is entirely natural so long as the capitalist system, under another form, remains intact in that domain. Only the form has changed; the basis and all of its effects remain.

Having failed in their attempt to construct a Socialist State, and having succeeded in building a capitalist State (the other State can be imagined), the Bolsheviks were obliged, as in all other fields, to retreat in everything that concerns the relations between the sexes: family, children, et cetera.

This was inevitable. *The situation in that field could be modified only if the whole society were to be changed fundamentally.* If that whole is not made over completely, if only the form changes, then all the customs, including the relations between the sexes, [and concerning] the family and children do not change either, except formally. Fundamentally, they remain what they were previously, while changing in appearance.

That is what happened in the U.S.S.R. Beginning with the month of May, 1936, all the "advanced principles" were discarded little by little. A [new] series of laws regulated marriage, divorce, the responsibility of spouses, et cetera.

This legislation has purely and simply re-established, although under new forms, the basis of "the bourgeois family". Free disposal of their bodies has been forbidden to women. Right to abortion has been strongly restricted. Today it is permitted only in exceptional cases, on the advice of a physician, and under specified circumstances. Abortion, and even the suggestion of it, if it takes place without legal authorization, is severely punished. [1]

Prostitution is widespread in the U.S.S.R. To be convinced of this, and also of the low level of "Soviet" customs in general, one merely needs, regularly and minutely, to run through the daily news summaries, the local correspondence, and kindred depart-

[1] See the law of May, 1936, enactment of which was followed by numerous arrests.

ments in the Russian press.

As for "equality of the sexes", that principle having prevailed for a long time in advanced Russian circles, the Bolsheviki naturally accepted it. But like the other glorious social or moral theses, it has been perverted, in its turn, as a result of the general deviation of the Revolution. Concretely, in the U.S.S.R., it is a question of "equality" in work, not in wages. The woman works the same as the man, but she receives lower pay. Therefore this "equality" permits the State to exploit the woman even more than the man.

Let us dwell briefly on the important subject of religion.

It is argued that the Bolsheviks were right about religious prejudices. This is an error, the source of which, again, is ignorance of the facts.

The Bolshevik government has succeeded, through terror, in suppressing public worship for a time. As for religious *sentiments*, far from having extirpated them, Bolshevism, with its methods and its "achievements", and in spite of its propaganda, has, on the contrary, either rendered them, more intense, among some, or simply transformed them among others.

Before the Revolution, and especially after 1905, religious sentiments were in a state of decline among the popular masses, which did not fail seriously to worry the popes[1] and the Tsarist authorities. Bolshevism succeeded in reviving them under another form.

Religion will be killed not by terror, not by propaganda, but by the effective success of the Social Revolution with its happy consequences. The anti-religious seeds which fall upon the fertile soil of that success will give it a bountiful harvest.

The objection is sometimes made to me that the Bolshevik government has done all it could to achieve such and such a success, and that it is not its fault if its efforts have not been crowned with total success.

Precisely. The more the good will of that régime can be demonstrated, the more will it become clear that the real Social

[1] Orthodox priests in Russia are commonly referred to as "popes".

Revolution and real Socialism cannot be achieved by the governmental and statist system.

"The Communist government, on its part, has used all of its good will to succeed," it is said to me.

I do not say the contrary. But the problem is not that. It is not a question of knowing whether the Government wanted or did not want to do this or that. It is a question of knowing whether it succeeded. The more it is proved that a government has not succeeded despite all of its good will, the more it becomes clear that a government could not succeed.

"The Government could not do any more."

Then why did it prevent other elements from trying? If it saw that it was impotent, it had no right to forbid others to act. And who knows what those other elements might have been able to achieve?

Why did the Government not succeed?

"The backward state of the country prevented it. The backward masses were not ready."

But nothing is actually known about this, since the Bolsheviki deliberately prevented the masses from acting. It is as though one were astonished because someone could not walk after someone else had tied his feet.

"The other elements of the left did not want to co-operate with the Bolsheviks."

But those elements did not want to submit blindly to the orders and exigencies of the Bolsheviki, which they considered evil. Then they were prevented from speaking and acting.

"The capitalist encirclement . . . "

Exactly—*the capitalist encirclement could impede a government* and make it degenerate. *But it never could have prevented or caused to degenerate the free action of millions of men,* ready, as we have seen, to achieve, with prodigious enthusiasm, the real Revolution.

To speak of a "betrayal of the Revolution", as Trotsky does, is an "explanation" outside, not only of any Marxist or materialist conception, but of the more ordinary common sense.

How was this "betrayal" possible, and the day after such a

beautiful and complete revolutionary victory?

That is the real question.

In reflecting, in examining the situation closely, the least initiated will understand that this alleged "betrayal" did not fall from the sky; that it was the "material" and rigorously logical consequence of the very manner in which the Revolution was conducted.

The negative results of the Russian Revolution were only the conclusion of a certain process. And the Stalinist régime was only the inevitable result of the procedures used by Lenin and Trotsky themselves. What Trotsky calls "betrayal" is in reality the unavoidable effect of a slow degeneration due to false methods.

Precisely: the governmental and statist procedure leads to "betrayal", that is, to the bankruptcy which today permits "betrayals"—the latter being only a striking aspect of this bankruptcy. Other procedures might have led to other results.

In his blind partiality (or rather, in his inconceivable hypocrisy) *Trotsky commits the most obvious of confusions,* unpardonable in his case; *he confuses the effects with the causes.*

Crudely deceiving himself (or pretending to fool himself, lacking other means to defend his thesis), he takes the effect (betrayal by Stalin) for the cause. An error—or rather, maneuver—which permits him to overlook the essential problem: What made "Stalinism" possible?

"Stalin has betrayed the Revolution." That is simple. It is, however, too simple to explain anything at all.

Nevertheless, the explanation is plain. "Stalinism" is the natural result of the bankruptcy of the real Revolution, and not inversely; and the bankruptcy of the Revolution, to carry the thought further, was the natural consequence of the false course on which Bolshevism led it.

In other words, *it was the degeneration of the thwarted and lost Revolution which led to Stalin, and not Stalin which made the Revolution degenerate.*

When attacked by the disease, the revolutionary organism could have resisted it victoriously by means of the free action of the masses; but since the Bolsheviks, guided by Lenin and by Trotsky himself, had taken from them all means of self-defense

against the evil, inevitably the latter ended by invading the whole organism and killing it.

The "betrayal" was possible, for the laboring masses did not react either against its preparation nor against its accomplishment. And the masses did not react because, totally subjugated by their new masters, they swiftly lost both the meaning of the real Revolution and all spirit of initiative, of free action and reaction. Chained, subjugated, dominated, they felt the uselessness—what am I saying?—the impossibility, of all resistance. Trotsky participated in person in reawakening the spirit of blind obedience among the masses, of dull indifference to everything that went on "above". The masses were beaten, and for a long time. From then on, any "betrayal" became possible.

In the light of all this, we invite the reader to use his own judgement about the Bolshevik "achievements".

CHAPTER 8
Counter-Revolution

THE CREATIVE impotence of the Bolshevik government, the economic chaos into which Russia was plunged, the despotism and unheard-of violence, the bankruptcy of the Revolution, and the tragic situation which resulted from it provoked first a far-flung discontent, and later wide-sweeping backwaters, and finally forceful movements against the insupportable state of affairs imposed by the dictatorship.

As always in such cases, those movements came from two opposite poles—from the side of Reaction, from the "right", which hoped to regain power and re-establish the old order, and from the side of the Revolution, from the "left", which hoped to redeem the situation and resume revolutionary action.

We shall not dwell long upon the counter-revolutionary movements—on the one hand, because they are more or less well known, and on the other, because in themselves they are only of secondary interest. Such movements are the same in all great revolutions.

Nevertheless, some aspects of these movements are sufficiently instructive so that they should not be passed over in silence.

The first resistances to the Social Revolution in Russia (in 1917 and 1918) were very limited, rather local, and relatively harmless. As in all revolutions, certain reactionary elements immediately took a stand against the new order, trying to nip the Revolution in the bud. The vast majority of the [industrial] workers, peasants, and members of the Army being (actively or passively) for this new order, these resistances were quickly and easily broken.

If, later, the Revolution had known how to show itself really fertile, powerful, creative, and just; if it had known how to solve satisfactorily its great problems and open new horizons for Russia and perhaps for other countries, [the opposition] certainly could

have been confined to those skirmishes, and the victory of the Revolution would not have been threatened. Too, subsequent events in Russia and elsewhere would have taken a turn much different from what we have witnessed for twenty years.

But, as the reader knows, Bolshevism, installed in power, perverted, chained, and castrated the Revolution. First it rendered it impotent, sterile, empty, and unhappy—and then gloomily, ignobly, tyrannically, uselessly, and stupidly violent. Thus Bolshevism ended by disillusioning, irritating, and disgusting larger and larger segments of the population. We have seen in what manner it strangled the workers, suppressed freedom, and wiped out the other movements. And its action of terror and cruel violence toward the peasants led them also to oppose it.

We must not forget that, in all revolutions, the bulk of the population, the simple apolitical people, the citizens pursuing their trades from day to day, the petty bourgeoisie, a part of the middle bourgeoisie, and a goodly number of the peasants at first remain neutral. They observe, hesitate, and wait passively for the initial results. It is important for the Revolution to be able to "justify itself" in the eyes of these elements as speedily as possible. If not, all such "lukewarm" people will turn away from the revolutionary work, become hostile to it, begin to sympathize with the counter-revolutionary machinations, support them, and render them much more dangerous.

Such is the situation especially during huge upheavals which involve the interests of millions of men, profoundly modifying social relations and doing it by means of prodigious suffering and with great promises of satisfaction. *This satisfaction must come quickly.* Or, *in any event, the masses must be able to hope for it.* If not, the Revolution weakens and the counter-revolution gets going.

Manifestly the active sympathy of these neutral elements is indispensable for the effective progress of the Revolution, for they include many "specialists" and professional men—skilled workers, technicians, intellectuals. All those people, who are not exactly hostile to the Revolution once it had been accomplished, will turn toward it and help it enthusiastically *if it manages to inspire them with a certain confidence, if it makes them feel its capacities, its*

possibilities, and its perspectives, its advantages, its strength, its truth, and its justice.

But if that condition is not attained, all such elements end by becoming open enemies of the Revolution, which is a serious blow to them.

One can well believe that the vast laboring masses, carrying out a free activity with the aid of the revolutionists, would know how to achieve convincing results, and hence would know how to reassure and finally attract these neutrals.

The dictatorship—impotent, arrogant, stupid, and viciously violent—does not achieve such results, and drives those people to the other side.

Bolshevism does not know how to "justify" itself, nor how to "justify" the Revolution. As we have seen, the only great problem which it succeeded in solving—indifferently, and under pressure from the Russian Army, which refused to fight—was that of the war. That success—the achievement of peace—won the confidence and the sympathies of the masses. But that was all. Soon its economic, social, and other impotence made itself felt. In fact, the sterility of its methods of action, governmental procedures, and statist absolutism revealed themselves almost on the day after victory.

The Bolsheviki and persons who sympathize with them like to invoke the "terrible difficulties" that their government had to surmount, after the war and the Revolution, in a country like Russia. And it is on the basis of these difficulties that they seek to justify all the Bolshevik procedure.

One might influence, with such arguments, the foreign public which doesn't know the facts. But the individuals who lived through the Revolution eventually became aware [of certain realities]: 1. That the evil methods of Bolshevism arose not so much from the difficulties encountered as from the very nature of the Bolshevist doctrine; 2. *That many of those difficulties arose specifically because the Government, from the beginning, set about stifling the free activity of the masses;* 3. That the real difficulties, instead of being smoothed over by the Bolsheviks, were greatly increased by them; 4. That these difficulties could have been surmounted easily by the free action of the masses.

The principal difficulty was certainly that of provisioning and rationing. To advance the Revolution, it was necessary to pass, as quickly as possible, from a régime of scarcity and an "exchange" economy (based on money) to a régime of abundance and a "distributive" economy, without money.

Yet the more important and the vaster the difficulties, the less a government could show itself capable of solving them; the more severe and thorny the situation, the more it would have to depend on the free initiative of the people. But, as we know, the Bolshevik régime monopolized everything: ideas, initiative, methods, and action. It instituted an absolute dictatorship ("of the proletariat"). It subjugated the masses, it smothered their enthusiasm. And the greater the difficulties, the less it permitted the "proletariat" to act.

It was not astonishing that despite the purported "industrialization" of its famous "five-year plans", Bolshevism did not know how to come to grips with these difficulties, and that it was driven, in its desperate struggle against the exigencies of life, to the most odious violence, which simply emphasized its real importance. It is not by means of forced industrialism imposed on a mass of slaves that [a nation] can reach abundance and build a new economy.

Intuitively the Russian masses felt the necessity of passing to other forms of production and of transforming the relations between production and consumption. More and more did they perceive the vital need and possibility of doing away with money and of inaugurating a system of direct exchange between the agencies of production and those of consumption. Repeatedly, here and there, they were even ready to make efforts in that direction. It is highly probable that if they had had freedom of action, they would have been able to arrive progressively at a real solution of the economic problem: the distributive economy. It was necessary to let them seek, find, and act, while guiding and helping them like true friends.

But the Lenin régime did not want to hear anything about that. The Bolsheviks pretended to do everything themselves and to impose their will and their methods. Intuitively at first, and more and more clearly later, the masses became aware of the inefficiency and impotence of the Government, and of the danger

into which the dictatorship and the violence was leading the country.

The psychological result of such a state of affairs is easy to comprehend. On the one hand, the populace turned away more and more from Bolshevism; disillusioned, they abandoned or grew hostile to it. The discontent, the spirit of revolt, increased with each day.

But, on the other hand, the masses did not know how to get out of the *impasse*. No valid solution presented itself, all ideological movements, all discussion, all propaganda, and all free action having been forbidden. The situation seemed to them insoluble. They did not have any way of acting. Their organizations had been nationalized, and militarized. The slightest opposition was severely repressed, and arms and all other material means were in the hands of the authorities and the new privileged stratum which had known how to organize their imposition [of authority] and their defense. [In the face of those circumstances the populace], though increasingly rebellious, did not see any possibility of undertaking effective action.

The counter-revolution which was lying in wait did not fail to take advantage of this situation and this spirit. Assiduously, it sought to turn to its advantage both that spirit and current events. Thus the more and more general and profound popular discontent served as a basis for far-sweeping counter-revolutionary movements, and supported them for three years.

Great armed campaigns were launched in the Southern and Eastern regions of Russia, plotted by the privileged class, supported by the bourgeoisie of other countries, and directed by generals of the old order.

Under the new conditions, the vast uprising in 1919-1921 took on a much graver character than the spontaneous and relatively insignificant resistance of 1917-18, such as the sedition of General Kaledin in the South, that of the *ataman* Dutov in the Urals, and others.

In 1918-19 several serious rebellions, on a large scale, were attempted here and there. Among these were the offensive by General Yudenitch against Petrograd in December, 1919, and the

counter-revolutionary movement in the North, under the aegis of the "Tchaikovsky" government there.

Well organized and well armed and equipped, the forces of Yudenitch reached the gates of the capital. Here they were easily destroyed by outbursts of enthusiasm and devotion and the remarkable organization of the laboring masses of Petrograd, with the aid of detachments of sailors from Kronstadt, outbursts vigorously supported by upheavals behind the enemy lines. The young Red Army, commanded by Trotsky, participated in the defense of the city. The Tchaikovsky movement succeeded in invading the district of Archangelsk and a part of that of Vologda. As elsewhere, its defeat was not effected by the Red Army. Spontaneous uprisings of the laboring masses, both on the spot and behind the front, put an end to it.

It is notable that that movement, supported by the foreign bourgeoisie, likewise encountered the resistance of the Western working class. Strikes and demonstrations against all intervention in Russia—especially strikes in British ports—disturbed that bourgeoisie, which did not feel secure at home, and made it withdraw its aid.

More important, however, was the insurrection led by Admiral Kolchak in the East, in the summer of 1918. Among other help, it had the support of a Czecho-Slovakian army, formed in Russia. It is notorious that Trotsky's Red Army was powerless to break this movement. It, too, was liquidated by a fierce partisan resistance of armed industrial workers and peasants, and by uprisings in the rear. The Red Army arrived "triumphantly"—after the job was done.

All these counter-revolutionary movements were more or less actively supported by the moderate Socialists—the Mensheviks and the right Social Revolutionaries.

It was at the time of the Czecho-Slovakian offensive that the Bolsheviks, to avert additional complications, and fearing an eventual rescue, executed, on the night of July 16-17, 1918, the former Tsar Nikolai II and his family, who had been deported to Ekaterinenburg, in Siberia. That city was later evacuated by the Bolsheviki.

The precise circumstances of this execution remain fairly mysterious, despite a meticulous investigation conducted by a jurist at Kolchak's order. It is not even known specifically whether these official killings [which took place in a cellar] were ordered by the central authorities in Moscow, or by the local Soviet. And as for the Bolsheviks themselves, they keep silent.

In that period the Russian populace, not yet disarmed by the Lenin régime, and retaining its confidence in the Bolsheviks' revolution, energetically resisted the counter-revolutionary movements and put an end to them with comparative facility.

But this situation changed completely at the end of 1919. The masses, disillusioned about and disgusted with Bolshevism (and disarmed by the "Soviet" government) no longer offered the same resistance to counter-revolutionary attempts. And the leaders of those movements now knew how to play on their sympathies perfectly. In their leaflets and manifestoes they declared that they were fighting only against the despotism of the Bolsheviki. They promised the people "free soviets" and the safeguarding of the other principles of the Revolution that were scoffed at by the Lenin government. (Of course, once victory was achieved, they had no intention of keeping these promises, but would subdue all revolts).

Thus the two great "White" uprisings in the center of the country, that of Gen. Anton Ivanovich Denikin and that of Baron Peter Wrangel, could assume such proportions that they were on the point of overthrowing the régime.

The first of these movements, directed militarily by General Denikin, rapidly invaded the whole Ukraine and a sizeable portion of central Russia in 1919. Breaking and routing the Red troops, this White Army reached the city of Orel near Moscow. The Bolshevik government was getting ready to flee when, to its great surprise, Denikin's Army suddenly lost its footing and retreated precipitously. The threat to Moscow was ended; the situation was saved. But again, the Bolsheviks and their Army did not play any part in this collapse.

General Wrangel led the second movement that was exceedingly dangerous for the Lenin régime. He followed Denikin's uprising. Wrangel, more artful, was able to learn several lessons

from the defeat of his forerunner, and won deeper and more solid sympathy than the latter. Moreover, the spiritual decline [of the Russian populace] was further advanced.

But Wrangel's movement, like that of Denikin, and various others of lesser importance failed.

That of Denikin went to pieces with strange suddenness. Having reached the gates of Moscow, his Army abruptly left everything and retreated in disorder to the South. There it disappeared in a catastrophic debacle. Its remnants, wandering across the country, were wiped out one after another by detachments of the Red Army, coming from the North on the track of the fugitives, and by partisans.

For at least 24 hours the Bolshevik government in Moscow, overcome by panic, could not believe that Denikin's troops had retreated, since they did not understand the reason for it. They got an explanation much later. Finally convinced, they sent some Red regiments in pursuit of the Whites. Denikin's whole movement was destroyed.

Wrangel's effort, beginning some time later, achieved several great successes at first. Without being able to threaten Moscow, it nevertheless worried the Lenin régime much more than Denikin's expedition. For the Russian populace, more and more disgusted with the Bolsheviks, seemed not to want to offer serious resistance to this new anti-Bolshevik drive; it remained indifferent.

But because of this almost general indifference, the Government could count on its own Army less than ever.

However, after those early successes, Wrangel's movement folded up like all the others.

What were the reasons for these almost "miraculous" reversals, for the final defeat of campaigns which began so successfully?

The real causes and the exact circumstances of those fluctuations are little known, [largely because] they have been deliberately distorted by biased authors.

Chiefly, the reasons for the downfall of the White movements were the following:

First, the awkward, cynical, and provocative attitude of the leaders. Having captured [certain areas of Russia] they installed themselves in the conquered regions as veritable dictators, no better

than the Bolsheviks. Uusually leading a dissolute life, and likewise incapable of organizing a healthy society, swelled with pride, and full of mistrust of the workers, they brutally made known to the latter that they intended to restore the old régime, with all of its "beauties". The alluring promises of their manifestoes, issued on the occasion of their offensives simply for the purpose of winning over the population, were quickly forgotten.

These gentlemen did not even have enough patience to wait for complete victory. They threw off their masks before they were secure, with a suddenness which soon revealed their real designs. And these boded nothing good for the masses. The White terror and savage reprisals, with their usual retinue of denunciations, arrests, and summary executions without trial and without mercy began to take place everywhere.

Moreover, the former landed proprietors and industrial lords, who left voluntarily or had been driven out with the advent of the Revolution, returned with the White armies and made haste to regain possession of their "property".

Thus the absolutist and feudal régime of the past had suddenly reappeared in all of its hideousness.

Such an attitude [on the part of the White leaders] swiftly provoked a violent psychological reaction among the laboring masses. They feared the return of Tsarism and of the *pomestchiki*, the big land-owners, much more than Bolshevism. With the latter, in spite of everything, they could hope to achieve some improvements, a redressing of wrongs, and finally "a free and happy life". But they could hope for nothing from the return of Tsarism. So it was necessary to block its path directly. The peasants, who at that time, had profited at least in principle by the expropriation of the available land, especially were terrified at the idea of having to restore those lands to the former owners. (This spiritual state of the masses explains, to a large extent, the momentary solidity of the Bolshevik government: of the two evils they chose the one which seemed to them the lesser).

Thus the revolt against the Whites was resumed immediately after their ephemeral victories. As soon as the danger was realized, the populace began to resist anew. And the partisan detachments, created in haste and supported by both the Red Army and by the

working multitude, which had recovered its understanding, inflicted crushing defeats on the Whites.

Notably, the army which contributed most to the destruction of Denikin's and Wrangel's commands was that of the insurgent peasants and workers of the Ukraine, known as the Makhnovist Army from the name of its military chief, the Anarchist partisan Nestor Makhno. Battling in the name of a free society, that army had to fight simultaneously against all the forces of oppression in Russia, against both the Whites and the Reds.

Speaking of the White reaction, it was Makhno's popular Army which compelled Denikin to abandon Orel and beat a precipitous retreat. And it was that same army which dealt an overwhelming defeat to the rearguard and the special forces of Denikin in the Ukraine.

As for Wrangel's armed forces, the fact of their first serious reversal, suffered at the hands of Makhno's army, was admitted to me by the Bolsheviks themselves, under rather curious circumstances.

During the period of Wrangel's furious offensive, I was in a Bolshevik prison in Moscow. Like Denikin, Wrangel beat the Red Army and drove it rapidly Northward. Makhno, who at this time, was warring against the Bolsheviki, decided, in view of the grave danger which the Revolution faced, to offer peace to them and lend them a hand against the Whites. Being in a bad way, the Bolsheviki accepted, and concluded an alliance with Makhno.

Immediately the Anarchist leader threw his forces against Wrangel's army and defeated it under the walls of Orekhov. The battle over, before continuing the struggle and pursuing Wrangel's retreating troops, Makhno sent a telegram to the Government in Moscow, announcing the victory and declared that he would not advance another step unless it set free both his adjutant Tchubenko and myself. Still having need of Makhno, the Bolsheviks agreed and liberated me. On that occasion they exhibited his telegram and praised the great fighting qualities of this partisan.

In ending my comments on the rightist reactions, I must emphasize the falsity of certain legends invented and spread by the Bolsheviki and their friends.

The first is that of the foreign intervention. According to the legend, that intervention was highly important. It is primarily in this way that the Bolsheviks explain the strength and success of some of the White movements.

That assertion, however, belies the reality. It is a gross exaggeration. In fact, the foreign intervention during the Russian Revolution was never either vigorous or persevering. A modest amount of aid, in money, munitions, and equipment: that was all. The Whites themselves complained bitterly of [its paucity] later on. And as for detachments of troops sent to Russia, they always were of minor significance and played almost no tangible part.

That is easily understood. In the first place, the foreign bourgeoisie had enough to do at home, both during and after the European war. Then, too, the military chiefs feared the "decomposition" of their troops from contact with the revolutionary Russian people. So such contact was avoided as much as possible. Events showed that these fears were well founded. Without speaking of the French and British detachments, which never came to fight against the revolutionaries, the troops of the Austro-German occupation (after the Brest-Litovsk treaty), fairly numerous and protected by the Ukrainian government of Skoropadsky, quickly decomposed and were won over by the Russian revolutionary forces.

I also would like to emphasize, in this connection, that the result of the German occupation confirmed the Anarchist thesis at the time of the peace of Brest-Litovsk. Who knows what the world would be like today if, at that time, the Bolshevik government, instead of dealing with the German imperialists, had let the Kaiser's troops penetrate into revolutionary Russia? Who can say whether the consequences of such penetration would not have been the same as those which later caused Denikin, Wrangel, the Austro-Germans, and all the rest to disappear?

But behold! Any government always means for the Revolution: the political way, stagnation, mistrust, reaction, danger, misfortune.

Lenin, Trotsky, and their colleagues were never revolutionaries.

They were only rather brutal reformers, and like all reformers and politicians, always had recourse to the old bourgeois methods,

in dealing with both internal and military problems.

They had not confidence in either the masses nor in the real Revolution, and did not even understand it.

In trusting these bourgeois statist-reformers with the fate of the Revolution, the revolutionary Russian workers committed a fundamental and irreparable error.

The explanation of everything that has happened in Russia since October, 1917, lies at least partly in this.

The second widespread legend is that of the important rôle of the Red Army. According to the Bolshevik "historians", it defeated the counter-revolutionary troops, destroyed the White offensives, and won all the victories.

Nothing could be more false. In all the big counter-revolutionary offensives, the Red Army was beaten and put to flight. It was the Russian people themselves, in revolt and only partially armed, who defeated the Whites. The Red Army, invariably returning after the blow (but in full force) to lend a hand to the already triumphant partisans, simply gave the *coup de grace* to the already routed White armies and crowned itself with the laurels of victory.

BOOK THREE

STRUGGLES FOR THE REAL SOCIAL REVOLUTION

FOREWORD

INDEPENDENTLY OF the reactions towards the right [which took place in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917] there also occurred, during and after the same period, a series of movements in the opposite direction. These were *revolutionary movements*, which fought the Bolshevik power in the name of true liberty and of the principles of the Social Revolution which that power had scoffed at and trampled underfoot.

Indeed, even within the ranks of the government and of the Communist Party itself, movements of opposition and revolt were provoked by the stifling statism and centralism, the terrifying tendency towards bureaucracy, the flagrant social impotence and the shameless violence of the Bolsheviks.

It was thus that, in the summer of 1918, the Left Social-Revolutionaries, who until then had participated in the government, left it, broke with the Bolsheviks, and declared against them. They soon succumbed under the blows of repression.

Later on, within the Bolshevik Party itself, there appeared what was called "the Workers' Opposition", the first manifestation of which constrained Lenin to publish his pamphlet entitled *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*. This "Workers' Opposition" was likewise destroyed by the repeated blows of an implacable repression. It was followed by other movements of opposition, always within the government and the Party, and all of these were likewise suppressed with a crushing ferocity.

All these movements, which were strictly political and were frequently quite mild [in their criticisms of the Party], have little intrinsic interest. To be sure, the future historian will find in them very edifying material for describing and judging the régime. But from the viewpoint of the revolution and its fate they were basically "family quarrels", despite the occasional fierceness of the struggle they provoked. If the oppositionists or rebels had won, the

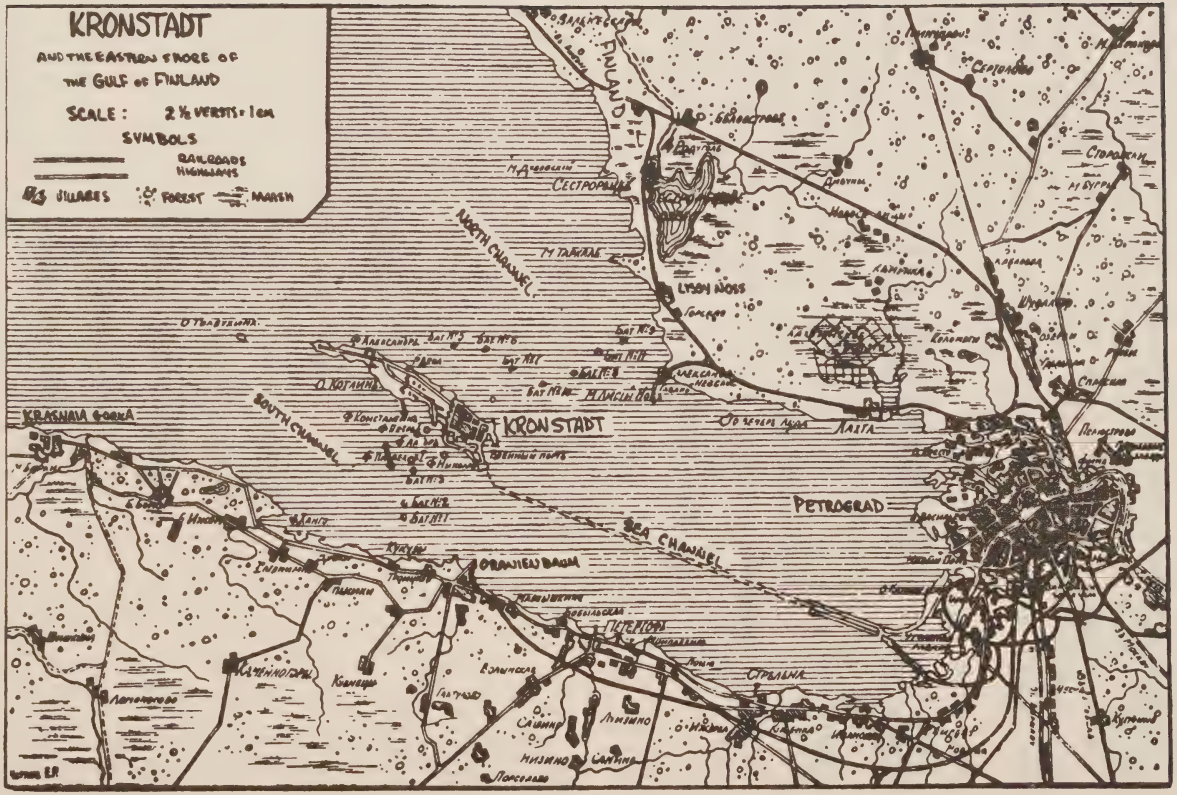
country would have had a change of masters without any alteration in its fundamental situation. The new masters would inevitably have been driven to adopt the policy and methods of their predecessors. For the people, nothing would have changed. Or rather, as the saying goes, "the more it would have changed, the more it would have remained the same thing."

It was outside these "palace" disturbances that there arose from time to time various leftist movements—sometimes on a large scale—which were essentially *popular,* movements of the masses, apolitical, strictly social and truly revolutionary.

We will concentrate primarily on two of these movements, the most conscious, the most important, and the least known [outside libertarian circles] of them all; that of Kronstadt in March, 1921, and the vast and vigorous movement in the Ukraine which lasted for nearly four years, from 1918 to the end of 1921.

PART I

KRONSTADT (1921)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CHAPTER 1
Geographical Notes

KRONSTADT IS a fortress, or rather, a fortified city, built two centuries ago on the Island of Kotlin, 30 kilometres west of St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) at the lower end of the Gulf of Finland. It defends the approaches from the Baltic Sea to the former capital, and is also the principal base of the Russian Baltic Fleet. The Gulf of Finland is frozen in winter, and communication between Kronstadt and Leningrad is carried on, for five months of the year (from November to April), over a snow road on top of the thick ice of the Gulf.

Kotlin Island—a narrow, elongated piece of land with very irregular contours—is 12 kilometres long. Its greatest width is from 2 to 3 kilometres. Its coasts are inaccessible and well fortified. The eastern part of the island, which faces Leningrad, contains the city of Kronstadt, the port and the docks, and occupies about a third of the total area. The north, west and south coasts are strewn with forts and bastions. Between these coasts and the city, at the time of the 1917 Revolution, the terrain was virtually desert.

To the north and south, the island is surrounded by many forts and batteries, projecting fairly far into the sea. On a point of the mainland, twenty kilometres away by sea and facing the island, there is the important fort of Krasnaia Gorka. On the other coast, facing the north shore of the island and ten kilometres away by sea, is the fortified cape called Lissy Noss.

Inside the city, the most noteworthy feature is the immense Anchor Square. Capable of holding up to 30,000 people, this square was formerly used for training conscripts and for military reviews. During the Revolution it became a regular popular forum. Whenever summoned, and at the slightest alarm, the sailors, soldiers and workers would rush there to hold monster meetings. During the winter, the same role was filled by the vast "maritime riding school."

The population of Kronstadt comprised, first, the crews of the Baltic Fleet, quartered in vast barracks, then the soldiers of the garrison, mainly artillerymen, and, finally, many officers, officials, merchants, skilled workers, etc., in all some 50,000 inhabitants.

CHAPTER 2
Kronstadt Before the Revolution

THE BALTIC FLEET and the Kronstadt garrison played a role of the very first importance in the Russian Revolution. Many factors contributed to this. In the first place, the sailors were recruited for the most part from the working class, from whom the navy naturally picked the best-qualified, most literate and alert recruits. But workers of this kind were also the most advanced politically. Frequently, before going to serve in the navy, they had been budding revolutionaries, sometimes even active militants, and inevitably, in spite of discipline and supervision, they wielded a strong influence over their shipmates.

Moreover, since the sailors often visited foreign countries in the line of their duty, they were in a good position to compare the relatively free régimes of these lands with that of Tsarist Russia. Better than any other section of the people, including the army, they assimilated the ideas and programmes of the political parties, while many of them maintained relations with the emigrés [in Western Europe] and read their forbidden and clandestine literature.

We should add that the proximity of the then capital, with its intense political, intellectual and industrial activity, contributed a great deal to the education of the men in Kronstadt. In St. Petersburg "political life" was at its fullest. There was an important mass of workers, and a numerous and turbulent youth at the University. The lively activity of the revolutionary groups, the ever more frequent and imposing disturbances and demonstrations, the scuffles that sometimes followed them, and the generally rapid and direct contact with political and social events, all induced the population of Kronstadt to take a lively and sustained interest in the internal life of the country, the aspirations and struggles of the masses, and the political and social problems of the day.

St. Petersburg, indeed, kept Kronstadt always on the alert, and sometimes in a fever. Already, in 1905-6 and in 1910, the

The City of Kronstadt.

Kronstadt sailors had attempted fairly serious revolts, which were severely repressed. But their spirit became all the more fierce and alive.

Finally, from the earliest days of the 1917 Revolution, the extreme leftist currents, the Bolsheviks, the Left Social-Revolutionaries, the Maximalists, the Syndicalists and Anarchists, all created active and well-organised centres in Kronstadt, and their activity soon exercised a considerable influence over the mass of the sailors.

For all these reasons, Kronstadt soon became the vanguard of the revolutionary people in 1917. Because of its energy, its developed consciousness, it was "the pride and glory of the Russian Revolution", as Trotsky said when it was aiding him to take power. This did not prevent him from turning his cannons against this "glory", whose members had now become "counter-revolutionary swine", as soon as it took a stand against the deviations and impostures of the Bolshevik Party.

Kronstadt sailors demonstrate for the power of the soviets, 1917.

CHAPTER 3
Kronstadt as the Vanguard of the Revolution

FROM FEBRUARY, 1917, for the whole duration of the Revolution, and nearly everywhere, the men of Kronstadt were in the thick of the struggle. They did not confine themselves to their local activity, energetic though it was. Full of revolutionary enthusiam and combative ardour, well-endowed with strength and audacity, conscious of their role, they unfalteringly gave the revolution all that it asked of them—their fire and their faith, their awareness and their vigour. They became devoted militants, ready to sacrifice their lives, they became agitators and popular propagandists, distributors of revolutionary literature throughout the country, technicians of every kind, and, above all, incomparable fighters.

In February, 1917, Kronstadt immediately rallied to the Revolution. Rising up and taking possession of their city, the sailors felt obliged to perform a painful but, in their opinion, necessary action. On the night of February 27th and 28th, they seized and executed on the spot some two hundred notoriously reactionary senior officers. The rancour and hatred that had accumulated over long years was thus assuaged, for among the victims were those who, during the attempted revolt of 1910, had ordered several hundred sailors to be shot, as well as causing the famous drowning at Fort Totleben of several boatloads of captured seamen.

The execution of these two hundred officers was the only bloody episode, for the sailors protected to the utmost of their ability, not only those officers whom they esteemed and liked, but also those who had simply refrained from ferocity during the repression. Through the whole period [of the uprising], groups of seamen sought everywhere for their own officers, who had been lost

in the tumult, and when they found that they had been arrested by some other crew, obtained their release and placed them in safety on their ships or in the barracks.

The sailors soon organised the first Soviet of Kronstadt. While it was initially very moderate (most of its members were Right Social-Revolutionaries or Mensheviks), this Soviet was propelled by the pressure of the revolutionary masses into sharp conflict with the Provisional Government. The immediate causes of these conflicts were insignificant, but their underlying import was serious and well understood by the masses. The government could tolerate neither the independent spirit nor the fervent activity of the men of Kronstadt. It sought at all costs to destroy the former and paralyse the latter; in short, to subdue the malcontents and entirely subjugate the city.

The first conflicts were settled amicably. After many meetings and deliberations, the people of Kronstadt considered it prudent to yield for the time being. At the same time, discontented with the weak attitude of the Soviet, they proceeded to elect new delegates.

Fresh conflicts with the Provisional Government soon broke out. Repeatedly, at the end of its patience, Kronstadt was on the point of an uprising, and only the feeling that the country would not yet understand this premature act made the sailors reconsider.

It was at this time that the first calumnies against Kronstadt were fabricated and circulated by the bourgeois press in Russia and abroad. "Kronstadt has seceded from Russia and has proclaimed itself an autonomous republic." "Kronstadt is coining its own money." "Kronstadt is on the point of concluding a separate peace with the Germans." These were some of the absurdities that were put about. Their purpose was to discredit Kronstadt in the eyes of the country, so as subsequently to be able to wipe it out without difficulty.

The first Provisional Government had no time to carry out this project. It fell, amid general hostility. Kronstadt, on the other hand, gained favour in the eyes of the masses.

The second Kronstadt Soviet was much farther to the left [than its predecessor]. It contained many Bolsheviks, several Maxi-

malists and several Anarchists.[1] However, the activity of the Soviet, and the inevitable struggles within it between the diverse factions, counted for little in comparison with the enormous activity that went on among the workers themselves, on the ships, in the barracks, in the workshops. At the meetings which followed each other in rapid succession at Anchor Square, all the problems of the revolution were discussed and examined from every point of view; the population lived through intense and passionate days. In this way Kronstadt educated itself and prepared for the exceptionally active part which it was soon to play in the struggles ahead, in every stage of the revolution and in every part of Russia.

At first the sailors were favourable to Kerensky, but soon they realised his true role, and two weeks after the famous unsuccessful offensive of June 18th, Kronstadt took a definite stand against him and his government. [Its antagonism was increased when] Kerensky, having learned of the hostile feeling in Kronstadt, tried to arrest a number of sailors when they went to Petrograd and also attempted other repressive measures.

The disturbances in Petrograd, where a revolutionary machine-gun regiment opposed being sent to the front with arms in hand, and was fired on by troops loyal to the government, fanned the flames. It was then that, on July 4th, twelve thousand sailors, soldiers and working men and women of Kronstadt landed in Petrograd, carrying red and black flags and placards bearing such slogans as "All Power to the local Soviets." The demonstrators marched towards the Tauride Palace, where the various factions, including the Bolsheviks, were deliberating on the political

[1]For many reasons, the presence of Anarchists in the Soviets was rather unusual. Outside Kronstadt, there were some Anarchists in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets. Elsewhere, an Anarchist in the Soviets was a rarity.

As for the *general* attitude of the Anarchists towards the Soviets, this altered according to their development. Favourable at first, when the Soviets still had the character of workers' organs, and when the revolutionary impetus allowed one to hope that they would be rendered satisfactory for certain useful functions, their attitude subsequently became sceptical, and finally entirely negative, as the Soviets were transformed into political organs manipulated by the government. The Anarchists thus began by not opposing the election of their comrades to these institutions. They later abstained and ended by pronouncing themselves "categorically and definitely against all participation in the soviets which have become purely political organs, organised on an authoritarian, centralist, statist basis" (Resolution of the *Nabat* Congress at Elizabeth in April, 1919).

situation. They wished to broaden their demonstration and draw in the masses and garrison of the capital, so that the struggle might be pressed as far as the fall of the government and its replacement by that of the Soviets. Their example was not followed, and, after losing several men during skirmishes in the streets with troops that supported the government, they had to recognise their failure and return to Kronstadt without having accomplished anything. The new revolution was not yet due.

The government, for its part, did not feel strong enough to deal severely with the demonstrators, and, after protracted negotiations during which both sides prepared for a merciless struggle (Kronstadt actually formed battalions for the purpose of attacking Petrograd), they finally reached an agreement and everything became peaceful again.

Certain features of this unsuccessful "sedition" are worth emphasising. The Bolsheviks played a preponderant role, and it was mainly their slogans that the demonstrators adopted. Within Kronstadt, their representatives were the principal organisers of the action. The sailors asked them: "What if the Party disowns the action?" They replied: "We will force it to support us." But since the Central Committee had not made any decision (or had decided to abstain) and since certain well-known Bolsheviks were negotiating with other political factions, [the Bolshevik leaders] participating only "unofficially", Lenin confined himself to delivering a speech of encouragement from a balcony and then disappeared. Trotsky and the other leaders refrained from any participation and kept out of sight. The movement was not theirs, they did not control it, and therefore it had no interest for them. They awaited their own hour.

A number of Bolsheviks, who had decorated an armoured car with a huge red flag bearing the initials of their Central Committee, wanted to place it at the head of the demonstration. But the sailors declared that they were acting, not under the auspices of the Bolshevik Party, but under those of their Soviet, and [sent the armoured car to] the rear.

The Anarchists, already influential in Kronstadt, took an active part in the action that day, and lost several men. But basically, it was a movement of the masses, of thousands of rebels.

After the July days, the bourgeois press again took up the calumnies against Kronstadt, insinuating that the rebellion was organised "with German money" (they even specified that each sailor was paid 25 gold roubles a day!) and speaking of treason. The Socialist press joined the chorus, and suggested that the movement was the work of "suspicious elements". This campaign allowed Kerensky to threaten Kronstadt with severe repressions. But, as we have seen, he did not dare to act.

The men of Kronstadt did not let themselves be intimidated in the least. They were becoming increasingly conscious of being on the right road, and also increasingly sure that the day was approaching when the masses would understand that the faith, the force and the aims that had inspired the activity of Kronstadt were also their own.

It was at this point that Kronstadt broke into an extraordinary and almost feverish activity. Its people began by sending a succession of agitators and popular propagandists into all parts of the country. Their slogan and rallying cry was "All power to the local Soviets." In the provinces these emissaries were arrested by the dozen, but Kronstadt replied by sending out more and more of them.

Soon, their efforts were repaid. The sailors of the Black Sea Fleet, who hitherto had supported Kerensky, finally began to doubt the "information from reliable sources" that was denouncing the "counter-revolutionary" role of Kronstadt. To set their minds at ease, they sent a delegation to Kronstadt. Solemnly received by the Soviet, this delegation conferred intimately with the residents of the city, learned their attitude, and uncovered the lies of the press and the authorities. From that moment, a close contact was established between the two fleets.

Furthermore, several units of troops at the front sent delegations to Kronstadt to discover the state of mind of the sailors, and to set things straight if necessary, so greatly had the reputation of Kronstadt been distorted by calumny. One of these delegations, composed of an imposing number of men, formed a regular military expedition. They arrived at Kronstadt in boats filled with weapons (even artillery and machine guns), ready for any eventuality. They were not taking any chances, for, if they were to

believe the rumours and the newspapers, they might well expect to be fired upon by the defenders of the "independent republic of Kronstadt", financed by Germany! They dropped anchor some distance from the shore, and first dispatched to the city a few small boats with "plenipotentiaries". Upon landing, these advanced carefully towards the city, like regular reconnaissance patrols in enemy country.

All this ended, as usual, in a solemn reception by the Soviet, and in intimate, passionate, but friendly discussions. The sailors went to visit the boats of the "expedition", which were brought into the port, and the guests visited the battleships. In the evening, the delegation returned convinced to the front, with cries of "All power to the local Soviets".

Often these delegations would propose that the sailors should replace their exhausted units at the front. Then the men of Kronstadt firmly explained their own viewpoint. "As long as the land is not given to the peasants and the revolution is not completely victorious," they said, "the workers have nothing to defend."

A little before General Kornilov's march on Petrograd, the reactionaries in their effort to master the political situation, re-established discipline in some sections of the army, re-instituted the death penalty at the front, and tried to destroy the soldiers' committees. Kronstadt accordingly renewed its preparations for an armed insurrection.

At about the same time, the Kerensky government under the pretext of reinforcing the Riga front, decided to remove the heavy artillery from Kronstadt and all the forts. The indignation of the sailors was unbounded. They knew perfectly well that this artillery could play no effective part at the front, and they also knew that the German Fleet was preparing to attack Kronstadt. They were getting ready to prevent this, which would have been impossible without artillery. Unable to believe that the members of the government could be so ignorant of the facts, they saw in Kerensky's decision a desire to disarm Kronstadt on the eve of attack, a direct treason against the revolution. They were completely convinced that the Kerensky government had decided to stifle the revolution by any means possible, not excluding the surrender of Kronstadt and Petrograd to the Germans.

Kronstadt did not hesitate. On the ships, in the forts and workshops, secret meetings were held to elaborate a plan for resistance and revolt. At the same time, dozens of sailors went every day to Petrograd where they toured the factories, workshops and barracks, openly preaching insurrection.

In the face of this fierce opposition, the government reconsidered and yielded. A compromise was negotiated, and only a small detachment went to the front. On the whole, the sailors were pleased with this solution, since, thanks to the vigilance of the officers' committees, the front was precisely the one place to which they had not succeeded in penetrating. An occasion now presented itself to carry there what was called "the Kronstadt contagion".

After the Kornilov *putsch* of August, 1917, in the destruction of which the sailors from Kronstadt especially distinguished themselves, the final distrust of the masses towards them was broken. At the same time, the popularity of Kerensky was diminishing every day. It was beginning to be understood everywhere that Kronstadt had been right to defy the government, to unmask the machinations of the reactionaries and not allow itself to be deceived.

The moral victory of Kronstadt was complete, and from this time onwards many workers' and peasants' delegations arrived there, seeking enlightenment on the real situation and asking for advice and suggestions for the future. On leaving, these delegations requested the sailors to send propagandists and literature into their regions. Kronstadt could ask for nothing better, and soon it could be said without exaggeration that there was not a single province, a single district, in which emissaries from Kronstadt had not spent at least a few days, advising direct expropriation of the land, refusal to obey the government, re-election and consolidation of the Soviets, a determined struggle for peace and a continuation of the revolution.[1] Thus, by their ceaseless activity, the men of Kronstadt instilled a revolutionary spirit into the workers' and peasants'

[1]It was in this period that the Right Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were being forced out of the Soviets, giving way to the Bolsheviks. And it was then that the essential elements of the next (October) revolution were being feverishly forged. Lenin was keeping in touch with this whole situation, and was himself preparing for his hour.

Members of the Kronstadt Council of Workers & Soldiers.

organisations and into the army,[1] while at the same time they took up a vigorous stand against all unauthorised acts, against all deeds of hatred and individual despair.

Everywhere that the revolution was fighting the old society, the men of Krondstadt were in the ranks of the fighters.

BEFORE FINISHING with the pre-Bolshevik period in Kronstadt, it remains for us to give an idea of the intense *constructive* work accomplished there in spite of the armed struggles and other urgent tasks. In this field the Kronstadt Soviet created two important organs, the Technical and Military Commission, and the Propaganda Commission.

The Technical and Military Commission comprised 14 members of the Soviet, together with several delegates from the Union of Maritime Transport Workers and from the ships and forts. In addition, the office of Special Commissar was created at each of the principal forts. These Commissars were charged with maintaining permanent contact between the forts, the Soviet and the Commission, and also with supervising the material condition of the forts and their equipment.

The Commission looked after everything that concerned the defence of Kronstadt and its technical needs. It was responsible, among other things, for the general arming of the workers, for forming them into battalions and giving them military training. It kept daily records of all the fighting units and also supervised the condition of the merchant ships, both cargo and passenger. It directed ship-repair work and was also in charge of the scrap iron with which the vast artillery depot was filled.

The Propaganda Commission was considered extremely important. It carried on a great educational activity, not only in Kronstadt itself, but also in more or less distant localities, whose extent steadily broadened across the country. Every day requests for orators, agitators, lecturers and propagandists came from the various forts, some of them were thirty kilometres away by sea, or from one or another suburb of Petrograd.

[1]We should add here that at the time [of all this activity] the Baltic Fleet had to sustain several hard battles with the German squadron in order to defend the access to Petrograd in the name of the revolution on the march.

The Commission ordered, assembled and distributed all kinds of literature, particularly political and social works (Socialist, Communist and Anarchist) and scientific popularisations, dealing especially with general and rural economics. Each sailor or soldier tried to gather together, with his own money, a little library which he first read carefully himself, and afterwards planned to take back to his "own country", his native village.

The methods employed in the choice and sending out of propagandists are worthy of some attention. Any workshop, military unit or ship could send a popular propagandist to the provinces. Any man who wished to travel in this capacity had to declare his intention to the general assembly of his unit or ship. If there were no objection, the committee of the unit or ship gave him provisional permission. He was then endorsed by the Propaganda Committee and went on to the secretary of the Soviet. If, at the general meeting of the Soviet, his application were supported by those who knew him personally, and if no one opposed him for revolutionary or moral reasons, the Soviet gave him formal and final permission in its own name. Its permit served him as a safe-conduct wherever he went. The money for these missions was supplied from the treasury of the Soviet, which was raised by voluntary levies from the workers' wages.

Almost always, the propagandist took with him products which were made especially by the Kronstadt workers as gifts to the peasants. These workers, particularly those who still took care of peasants 'back home", set up a shop where in their spare time they produced articles of a kind that were necessary in the country —nails, horseshoes, sickles, ploughs, etc. They were helped in these tasks by soldier and sailor specialists. The enterprise took the name of The Kronstadt Workers' Union. It requested all the inhabitants of the city to bring their unuseable scrap, and also obtained it from the Technical Commission.

The emissaries from Kronstadt never forgot to supply themselves with these products to present to the peasants through the local Soviets. Letters of warm gratitude flooded in to the Kronstadt Soviet from peasants who promised, in exchange, to support that city in the struggle for bread and liberty.

Another [interesting constructive] enterprise was a kind of

horticultural commune which was set up when the inhabitants of Kronstadt used the empty land between the shores and the city for collective vegetable gardens. Groups of city people, consisting of about 50 persons living in the same district or working in the same shop, undertook to work the land in common. Each of these communities received from the city a plot of land chosen by lot. The community members were helped by specialists, surveyors and agronomists.

All questions of interest to the members of these communities were discussed at meetings of delegates or in general assemblies. A provisioning committee took charge of distributing seeds. Tools were supplied by depots in the city and by the community members themselves. The fertiliser was also supplied by the city.

These kitchen gardens rendered an important service to the inhabitants of Kronstadt, especially during periods of famine, in 1918 and later. The communities [which were formed around them] also served to bring the inhabitants closer together. This free community movement showed great vitality; it still existed in 1921 and remained for a long time the only independent institution which the Bolsheviks could not destroy [in Kronstadt].

All matters concerning the public services in Kronstadt and the internal life of the city were administered by the citizens themselves, through the medium of house committees and militia, and little by little they advanced towards the socialisation of dwellings and of all urban services.

Generally speaking, at Kronstadt and elsewhere in Russia before the enthronement of the Bolsheviks, the inhabitants of a house first organised a number of tenants' meetings. These meetings named a tenants' committee, which consisted of men who were energetic and capable of fulfilling some necessary function. The Committee supervised the upkeep of the house and the welfare of its inhabitants, it designated the day and night janitors, etc. Each House Committee delegated one of its members to the Street Committee, which was in charge of matters that concerned the whole street. Then came the District Committee, the Borough Committee and finally the City Committee, which was concerned with the interests of the whole city and, in a natural and logical manner, carried out whatever centralisation of services was

necessary.

The organisation of the militia was similar to that of the Committees: each house had a group of militiamen, drawn from the tenants; there were also street militia, district militia, etc.

All of the public services functioned admirably, for the men in charge of them acted from personal inclination or individual aptitude, and therefore conscientiously and intelligently, fully aware of the importance of their activity.[1] Thus, in making their way towards complete socialisation of dwellings and all urban services, the workers of Kronstadt achieved at the same time a complex of peaceful and creative measures, which pointed towards a fundamental transformation of the very basis of social life.[2]

[1]From August to November, 1917, the author of these lines, who was then living in Petrograd, went frequently to Kronstadt, to lecture and to see at first hand the free and intense life of the population. Certain details are taken from the excellent Russian pamphlet written by another militant who lived in Kronstadt and actively participated in all its works—*Kronstadt in the Russian Revolution* by E. Yartchuk. The pamphlet has not been translated.

[2]Naturally, when they achieved power, the Bolsheviks liquidated, little by little, this autonomous administration and replaced it by a mechanical statist organisation controlled by officials.

CHAPTER 4
Kronstadt Turns Against the Bolshevik Imposture

WE ARE NOW approaching the crucial point of the Kronstadt epic: its desperate and heroic struggle, in March, 1921, against the usurpations of the Bolsheviks, and the consequent termination of its independence.

The first dissensions between the men of Kronstadt and the new government took place almost immediately after the October Revolution. The slogan of *All Power to the Local Soviets* meant to Kronstadt the independence of each locality, of each Soviet, of each social organisation in the matters which concerned it alone. It meant the right to take initiatives, to make decisions, and to act without asking permission from the "centre". According to this interpretation, the "centre" could neither dictate nor impose its will on the local Soviets, since each Soviet, each workers' and peasants' organisation, was its own master. Of course, it must co-ordinate its activity with that of other organisations, but on a federal basis. Matters concerning the whole country would be co-ordinated by a general federative centre. Kronstadt therefore supposed that, under the protection of a "proletarian" and "friendly" government, free federations of Soviets and factory committees would progressively create a powerful organised force, capable of defending the conquests of the social revolution and of continuing it.

But the government naturally concerned itself with everything but the fundamental problems—those of helping the workers' and peasants' organisations to emancipate themselves fully. It was preoccupied with the Constituent Assembly, with its own installation in office, with its prerogatives, with its relations to the various political parties, with the elaboration of projects for collaboration with the remaining bourgeoisie ("workers' control of production"), etc. It concerned itself very little with the independence of workers' organisations. In fact, it gave it no thought at all.

Indeed, the Bolshevik government evidently understood the

slogan "power to the Soviets" in a peculiar way. It applied it in reverse. Instead of giving assistance to the working masses and permitting them to conquer and enlarge their own autonomous activity, it began by taking all "power" from them and treating them like subjects. It bent the factories to its will and liberated the workers from the right to make their own decisions; it took arbitrary and coercive measures, without even asking the advice of the workers concerned; it ignored the demands emanating from the workers' organisations. And, in particular, it increasingly curbed, under various pretexts, the freedom of action of the Soviets and of other workers' organisations, everywhere imposing its will arbitrarily and even by violence.

[The following example from the history of Kronstadt illustrates both the arbitrary attitude of the government and its incompetence when faced by the real problems of the revolution].

In the beginning of 1918, the working population of Kronstadt, after debating the subject in many meetings, decided to proceed to socialise dwelling places. It was a question, first of all, of obtaining the agreement of the local Soviet, then of creating a competent organisation to carry out a census and examination of buildings and an equitable redistribution of dwellings, together with their rehabilitation and maintenance and the initiation of repair services and new construction.

A final monster meeting definitely instructed several members of the Soviet—Left Social-Revolutionaries and Anarcho-Syndicalists—to raise the question at the next plenary session. In consequence, a detailed project, drawn up by these delegates, was deposited at the office of the Soviet.

The first article of the project declared: "From henceforward private property in land and buildings is abolished." Other articles specified: "The management of each building will henceforward be the duty of a House Committee elected by all its tenants . . . Important matters concerning a building will be discussed and settled by a general meeting of tenants . . . Matters concerning a whole district will be examined by general assemblies of its inhabitants; District Committees shall be appointed by them . . . The Borough Committee will be in charge of matters concerning the whole city."

The Bolshevik members of the Soviet asked that discussion be delayed for a week, on the pretext that the problem was very important and required a thorough examination. When the Soviet agreed to this postponement, they went to Petrograd to get instructions from the "centre".

At the next session, the Bolsheviks asked for the adjournment of the project under consideration. They declared, in particular, that such an important problem could only be resolved for the whole country, that Lenin was already in the process of preparing a decree on this subject, and that, for the sake of the project itself, the Kronstadt Soviet should wait for instructions from the "centre".

The Left Social-Revolutionaries, Maximalists and Anarcho-Syndicalists asked for an immediate discussion and carried the vote. In the course of the debate, the extreme Left underlined the necessity of voting immediately after the discussion and of proceeding to the immediate implementation of the project if it were adopted. But the Bolsheviks and the Social-Democrats (Mensheviks), forming a united front, got up and left the hall. Sustained, ironical applause, and cries of "At last they are united!" accompanied their action.

In order to settle the matter, a Maximalist delegate proposed that the Soviet vote on the project, article by article. This would allow the Bolsheviks to return and take part in the voting, and thus erase the false impression left by their withdrawal that they were against the abolition of private property.

This proposal was adopted. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks realised that they had made a tactical error. They resumed their seats and voted for the first article: "Private property in land and buildings is abolished." This was a vote of "principle" for them. But when the articles dealing with the means of immediately realising this principle came up for discussion, they again left the hall.

Several Bolsheviks, however, considered it impossible to submit to party discipline in this affair. They remained in their places, took part in the discussion, and voted for the project. They declared that they had a formal mandate from their electors to vote for its immediate realisation. Nevertheless, they were severely censured, and expelled from the party for "Anarcho-Syndicalist deviation."

The project was adopted But for a long time afterwards it was the subject of a continued and passionate struggle in the workshops, battalions and ships. Meeting followed meeting. The members of the Soviet were invited to give reports on the details of the discussion and on their position. Certain Bolsheviks opposed to the project were recalled from the Soviet by their electors.

After these occurences, the Bolsheviks opened a violent campaign against the Anarcho-Syndicalists, and they also tried to sabotage the realisation of the adopted project. Nothing came of their efforts. Soon the committees (house, district, etc.) were appointed and began to function. The project became alive. The principle of "each inhabitant has the right to a decent dwelling" became a reality.

All dwellings were methodically visited, examined and entered in the census by the committee, for the purpose of establishing a more equitable distribution. On the one hand, horrible hovels were discovered in which the unfortunate lived, sometimes several families together. On the other hand, there were comfortable apartments of ten or fifteen rooms which were occupied only by a few persons. For example, the Director of the Engineering School, a bachelor, occupied by himself a luxurious apartment of twenty rooms, and when the commission came to take the census and reduce his "living space" for the benefit of several unfortunate families removed from stinking hovels, he protested hotly and called this act a "downright robbery".

Soon all those who filled the unhealthy shacks and garrets and the filthy cellars were lodged in somewhat cleaner and more comfortable places. Several hotels for travellers were also established. And each Borough Committee organised a workshop for the repair and improvement of buildings; these shops functioned efficiently.

Later on, the Bolshevik government destroyed this organisation and wiped out its constructive beginnings. The management of buildings passed to a purely bureaucratic institution, the Real Estate and Buildings Centre, which was organised from above and attached to the National Economic Council. This Centre installed in every building, district and borough an official or, to be more accurate, a *policeman,* whose main function was to supervise

activities in the houses, to keep track of the movements of the inhabitants in each district, to report infractions of lodging and visa regulations, to denounce "suspects", etc.

Several sterile bureaucratic decrees were promulgated, but all the work, all the positive, concrete tasks, were abandoned. The population concerned was eliminated from [participation in control of] the undertaking (as in other fields), and everything fell back into a state of inertia and stagnation. The better buildings were requisitioned for the bureaucratic service of the state, for officials' apartments etc., and the rest, more or less abandoned to their fate, soon began to deteriorate.

As a result of proceedings of this kind in *every field of life*, the sailors of Kronstadt were not slow to realise that they had been deceived and deluded by the false slogans of the "Proletarian State", the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat", etc. They realised that, under a pretence of friendliness, new enemies of the working masses had installed themselves in power.

They did not conceal their disillusionment. A peaceful but firm opposition to the bureaucratic, arbitrary, anti-social and anti-revolutionary acts of the Bolshevik government began to appear in their ranks by the end of 1917, barely two months after the October Revolution.

But the Bolsheviks were watchful, for the government knew perfectly well how matters stood with the militants of Kronstadt, and it could not consider itself secure so long as this citadel of the real revolution continued to exist so close to Petrograd. *It was necessary at all costs to reduce it to impotence and obedience.*

The government therefore elaborated a Machiavellian scheme. Not daring to attack Kronstadt openly, by frontal assault, it began —methodically and slyly—to weaken, impoverish and exhaust it, by means of a series of camouflaged measures aimed at depriving Kronstadt of its best forces, taking away its more combative elements, exhausting their strength and, in the last resort, annihilating them.

To begin, it exploited more than ever the revolutionary enthusiasm and abilities of the sailors. When, shortly after October, the food situation of the city population became catastrophic, the government asked Kronstadt to form special crews of

propagandists and to send them into the provinces, the country districts and the villages to preach to the peasants the ideas of solidarity and revolutionary duty, and, in particular, the necessity for feeding the cities. The revolutionary fame of the men of Kronstadt, said the Bolsheviks, could render immeasurable service to the cause. More easily than anyone else, the sailors could convince the peasants to give up part of their produce to the starving workers.

Kronstadt complied. Numerous formations departed for the depths of the country and carried out the tasks allotted. But nearly all these detachments were scattered in a thousand directions. For various reasons, their members were forced to remain in the interior of the country, and did not return to Kronstadt.

The government also sent constantly to Kronstadt for large detachments to be dispatched wherever the internal situation became uncertain, threatening or dangerous. Kronstadt always responded, and many of its brave militants and fighters never saw their ships or their barracks again.

Kronstadt was also constantly requested to send men to perform functions or occupy posts requiring special abilities, responsibility or courage. Leaders of military formations, commanders of armoured trains, armoured cars and railway stations, specialised workers, mechanics, lathe-workers, gun-mounters, etc., were continually being drawn from among the Kronstadters, who were ready for any sacrifice. When the Kaledin uprising in the South became serious, Kronstadt again sent considerable forces against it, which contributed significantly to the destruction of the enemy and left many of their own men on the battlefield.

All these preliminary measures were finally crowned by a hammer blow which Kronstadt, already seriously weakened, could not resist effectively. When, at the end of February, 1918, the sailors returning from the expedition against Kaledin got off the train at the terminus, from which they could look out over the panorama of the Gulf of Finland under its winter blanket of snow, they were suprised to see that the road across it was black with people. They were sailors from Kronstadt who were going towards Petrograd with their duffle-bags on their backs. Soon those who

were returning learned the bitter truth from the mouths of those who were leaving.

Contrary to the resolution adopted by the Pan-Russian Congress of Sailors directly after the October Revolution, which proclaimed, in conformity with the unanimous mandate given the delegates, that the fleet should not be demobilised, but should remain intact as a revolutionary fighting unit, the Council of People's Commissars issued, at the beginning of February, 1918, the famous decree according to which the existing fleet was declared disbanded. A new "Red Fleet" was to be created, on a new basis. Each conscript must henceforth sign an individual pledge that he entered the navy "voluntarily". And—a significant detail—the pay of the sailors was to be made very attractive.

The sailors refused to carry out the decree, and the government replied with an ultimatum: either submit or rations would be withheld within 48 hours. Kronstadt did not feel strong enough to resist at that moment. Raging at heart, cursing the new "revolutionary" power, the sailors packed their belongings and left their fortress, carrying a number of machine guns away with them. "We may perhaps need them yet," they said; "Let the Bolsheviks arm their future mercenaries."[1]

Later on, a certain number of sailors, returning from the revolutionary fronts for various reasons, came back to Kronstadt and reorganised themselves there. But this was only an insignificant handful. The principal force was scattered all over the immense country.

Kronstadt was not the same city any more. The government had repeated assurances of this fact. For example, during the negotiations with Germany, the Kronstadt Soviet, like the overwhelming majority of other Soviets, voted against making peace with the German generals. At all the meetings and assemblies such a treaty was repudiated. Then the Bolsheviks, after taking certain precautions, annulled the first vote, raised the question a second time, and imposed a peace resolution. Kronstadt yielded.

[1]As is well known, the Bolshevik government disarmed the whole population a few months later. Every citizen, whoever and wherever he might be, was summoned to turn in his weapons to the local authorities, under penalty of death.

The peace having been concluded, and the compact revolutionary bloc of Kronstadt, the Black Sea Fleet, etc., having been finally dissolved, the Bolshevik government had a clear field in which to consolidate its dictatorship over the working people. When, in April, 1918, in Moscow and elsewhere, it attacked the Anarchist groups, closed their meeting places, suppressed their papers, and threw their militants into prison, Kronstadt once again bared its claws, but they no longer had the same sharpness. It was now impossible for the sailors to turn their guns against the usurpers, for the latter were no longer within range of them. They were already entrenched, like earlier tyrants, behind the walls of the Kremlin in Moscow. Kronstadt had to confine itself to two resolutions of protest: one was adopted at a monster mass meeting held on Anchor Square, the other by the Soviet.

Immediately a fierce repression was imposed on "the pride and glory of the revolution". The Bolsheviks forbade the spontaneous calling of meetings. The Soviet was dissolved and replaced by a more docile one. A unit of the Cheka was installed in the city. Communist cells were created everywhere, in the workshops, the regiments and the ships. Everyone was spied upon by informers, and for the slightest criticism of Bolshevik actions the "guilty" were seized and dispatched to Petrograd, where most of them disappeared.

Only once did Kronstadt rise up successfully [against these repressive activities]. The battleship *Petropavlovsk* flatly refused to turn over to the authorities an anarchist sailor named Skurikhin. This time the Bolsheviks did not insist. It would not have been prudent or worth while to provoke an insurrection over a single individual whom in any case they could get later by some other means.

Except for this single jarring incident the Bolshevik government congratulated themselves that the advance guard of the real Revolution, Kronstadt, was virtually powerless, broken under the iron fist of Communist power. Nevertheless, this was only half true.

For months, Kronstadt powerlessly witnessed the usurpations and crimes of the gravediggers of the revolution. Returning from leave, the sailors told about the way in which the "Workers' Power"

treated the workers. In the country it requisitioned produce from the peasants, mercilessly, down to the last grain, the last animal, often even to household effects, thus condemning the cultivators to a famished existence; it did not hesitate to resort to mass arrests and executions of those who were recalcitrant. Around the cities, there were barriers with armed guards who pitilessly confiscated the few miserable bags of flour which the peasants sent in—usually to their starving relatives—and threw those who resisted into prison; at the same time, they turned a blind eye to the real merchants who passed through with their merchandise destined for speculation, for these knew how to grease the necessary palms.

"The working people are disarmed," said the returning sailors. "It is clear that the general arming of the workers, and their freedom of speech and action, frightened not only the proven counter-revolutionaries, but also those who have abandoned the true course of the revolution. They created the Red Army, which like all armies, had ended by becoming a blind force in the hands of the party in power. Detached from their roots in the workshops and among their fellow workers, the soldiers were pampered, misled by deceptive slogans, subjected to a brutalising discipline, and deprived of the means of acting in an organised way, so that they could easily be manipulated to do whatever those who are in control of them may desire."

The men of Kronstadt listened, watched and seethed with indignation, but they felt themselves powerless to act. Meanwhile the people were constantly and increasingly fettered, muzzled and subjugated.

FINALLY, IN spite of [all the repressions], the storm burst. It started not in Kronstadt, but in Petrograd. By the end of February, 1921, the situation of the working masses in the cities had become unendurable. The whole of their normal life had disintegrated. The most necessary commodities were lacking. Even bread was rationed and hard to get. For lack of fuel, the houses could no longer be heated. The railways hardly functioned, and many factories closed down, thereby aggravating the situation.

The appeals, questions and protests of the workers accomplished nothing. The Bolshevik government was perfectly aware of the gravity of the situation, and even admitted its inability to

remedy it. But it stubbornly refused to alter its policy. It would not even enter into discussion with the dissatisfied workers, and repulsed in advance all suggestions, all collaboration, all initiative. Its only remedy was more requisitioning, more military action, more repressive measures, carried out with the most arbitrary violence.

Serious disturbances finally broke out in Petrograd. Several of the most important factories improvised general assemblies of workers and adopted resolutions hostile to the government, demanding a change of the régime. Proclamations to the same effect appeared in the workshops and on the walls of the city, and the masses stirred confusedly.

Naturally, in this vast popular movement, various elements were present and various viewpoints appeared. Since the freedom of ideas or discussion was not permitted, and since many *revolutionaries* were in prison, this new ferment was necessarily vague and confused. Because the Revolution had already gone astray, the whole movement was inevitably distorted.

In these conditions, it was natural that certain elements, influenced by anti-revolutionary propaganda—especially that of the moderate Socialists—should propose measures and solutions which would have thrown the revolution into reverse, instead of trying to remove the obstacles so that it could go *forward*. Thus, there were those who asked for the return to free trading and the calling of a Constituent Assembly.

Nevertheless, three important facts must be borne in mind:

1. The elements in question were far from prevailing in the movement as a whole. They were never the strongest, nor the boldest. Freedom of propaganda for the Left, freedom of action for the masses, could still, with the help of the sincere Bolsheviks, have saved the situation; it could have found a solution and given the revolution a new impulse in the right direction.

2. We must not forget that, from the general point of view, Bolshevism itself represented a *reactionary* system. There were thus two reactionary forces present: one composed of certain anti-Bolshevik elements, which were held in check, and the other, Bolshevism itself, which paralysed and petrified the revolution. The only really revolutionary forces were elsewhere.

3. Of these other elements who represented the true revolutionary forces, Kronstadt was the most important. The men of

Kronstadt envisaged a solution which, although hostile to the Bolsheviks, had nothing at all in common with such reactionary ideas as the Constituent Assembly or the return of private capitalism, and the activity carried on by Kronstadt at the very beginning of the movement gives ample proof of this.

In response to certain proclamations and to the general propaganda demanding the calling of the Constituent Assembly, Kronstadt secretly sent delegates to the factories and workshops of Petrograd with the following message to the workers:

"All the revolutionary energy of Kronstadt, its guns and machine-guns, will be resolutely directed against the Constituent Assembly, and against all retreat. But if the workers, having become disillusioned with the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', take a stand against the new imposters, for free Soviets, for freedom of speech, press, organisation and action for workers and peasants of all ideological tendencies—Anarchist, Left Social-Revolutionary or otherwise—if the workers rise up in a third, genuinely proletarian revolution for the real slogans of October, then Kronstadt will support them with all its strength, unanimously and with the will to conquer or die."

Spontaneous meetings in all the large factories began on February 22nd, and on the 24th the disturbances took a more serious turn. That morning the authorities, intent on a "purge", undertook an examination of the individual work-cards of the workers at the Troubotchny factory, one of the largest in Petrograd. That was the final provocation. The factory stopped working. Several dozen workers went to other factories to call out their personnel and soon the Baltic and Laferme factories, and the Patronny munition workers, joined the strike.

A crowd of two or three thousand excited workers formed in the street and tried to demonstrate. The "Workers' and Peasants' Government", which possessed sufficient special forces of police and soldiers to combat movements of this kind, despatched detachments of students from the Military Academy (officer students called *kursanti*) to the spot. Collisions took place between these troops and the unarmed crowd. The workers were dispersed, and elsewhere the police and troops prevented several meetings.

On the 25th of February, the movement was still growing, and spread to the whole city. The strikers called out the workers of

the Admiralty Arsenal and of the port of Galernaia. Masses of workers gathered here and there, and were again dispersed by special formations.

Seeing the disorder increasing, the government alerted the Petrograd Garrison. But this also was in ferment, and several units declared that they would not fight against the workers. They were disarmed, but the government could no longer depend on the garrison. It therefore did without it and brought from the provinces and from certain fronts of the civil war a number of detachments of élite and predominantly Communist troops. On the same day the government created in Petrograd a Defence Committee under the presidency of Zinovieff, to co-ordinate all action against the movement.

On the 26th of February, at the session of the Petrograd Soviet, a notorious Communist named Lachevitch, a member of the above Committee and also of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, made a report on the situation. He denounced the workers of the Troubotchny works as trouble-makers, describing them as "men who think only of their own personal interests" and as "counter-revolutionaries". In consequence, the works were closed, and the workers were automatically deprived of their food rations. During the same session, the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, Kuzmin, mentioned for the first time a certain amount of unrest among the crews of the warships berthed at Kronstadt.

From February 27th, a considerable number of proclamations of various kinds were distributed in the streets and posted on the walls of Petrograd. One of the most characteristic said:

"A fundamental change in the policy of the government is required. In the first place, the workers and peasants need liberty. They do not want to live according to the regulations of the Bolsheviks; they want to decide their own destinies for themselves.

"Comrades, maintain revolutionary order! Demand, in an organised and determined way: Liberation of all imprisoned Socialists and non-party workers; Abolition of the state of siege, and freedom of speech, press and assembly for all who work; Free re-election of shop committees and of representatives to the unions and the Soviets."

The government replied by mass arrests and by the suppression of various workers' organisations.

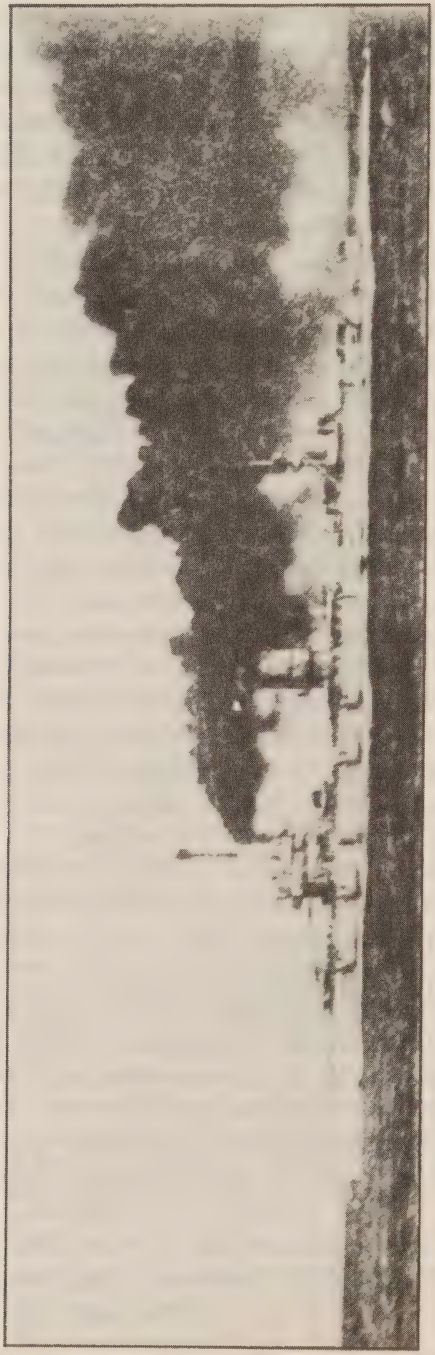
On February 28th, the Communist military forces, brought from elsewhere, invaded Petrograd. Immediately, a pitiless repression fell upon the workers. Disarmed, they could not resist. In two days, the strikes were broken by force and the workers' agitation was wiped out "by an iron hand", as Trotsky put it. But it was precisely on February 28th that Kronstadt went into action.

ON THAT FEBRUARY 28th, the crew of the battleship *Petropavlovsk*, who had been for several days in a state of agitation, adopted a resolution which quickly gained the support of another warship, the *Sebastopol*. The movement extended rapidly to the whole fleet and won over the Red regiments of the garrison. Several delegations of sailors were sent to Petrograd to establish a closer connection with the workers there and to obtain exact information about the situation. This activity of the sailors was entirely peaceful and loyal. It gave moral support to certain of the workers' demands, which was not at all abnormal in a "Workers' State" directed by a "proletarian government."

On March 1st, a public meeting took place in Anchor Square. It was officially called by the 1st and 2nd Squadrons of the Baltic Fleet, and the announcement appeared in the organ of the Kronstadt Soviet. On the same day, Kalinin, the president of the All-Russian Central Executive, and Kuzmin, the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, arrived at Kronstadt. Kalinin was received with military honours, music and unfurled banners.

Sixteen thousand sailors, Red soldiers and workers attended the meeting. The chair was taken by the President of the Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet, the Communist Vassilieff. Kalinin and Kuzmin were present.

The delegates who had been sent to Petrograd made their reports. Highly indignant, the meeting expressed its disapproval of the methods employed by the Communists in putting down the legitimate aspirations of the Petrograd workers. The resolution adopted the previous day by the *Petropavlovsk* was then brought before the assembly. During, the discussion, President Kalinin and Commissar Kuzmin attacked the resolution, the Petrograd strikes and the Kronstadt sailors with extreme violence. But their speeches had no effect. The resolution of the *Petropavlovsk* was



The battleship Sevastopol.

put to a vote by a seaman named Petrichenko and was approved unanimously. Commissar Kuzmin noted the event in these words: "The resolution was adopted by the overwhelming majority of the Kronstadt garrison. It was brought up at the general meeting of the city on March 1st, in the presence of nearly 16,000 citizens, and unanimously adopted. The President of the Executive Committee of Kronstadt, Vassilieff, and Comrade Kalinin, voted gainst the resolution."

Here is the complete text of this historic document:

"*Resolution of the General Meeting of the 1st and 2nd Squadrons of the Baltic Fleet, held on March 1st,* 1921.

"After having heard the reports of the delegates sent to Petrograd by the general meeting of the crews to examine the situation, the assembly decided that, since it has been established that the present Soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, it is necessary:

1. to proceed immediately to the re-election of the Soviets by secret ballot, the electoral campaign among the workers and peasants to be carried on with full freedom of speech and action;

2. to establish freedom of speech and press for all workers and peasants, for the Anarchists and the Left Socialist parties;[1]

3. to accord freedom of assembly to the workers' and peasants' organisations;

4. to convoke, outside of the political parties, a Conference of the workers, Red soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt and the Petrograd province for March 10th, 1921, at the latest;

[1]It is necessary to know Kronstadt in order to understand the true meaning of this clause. In fact, it has an air of wanting to limit freedom of speech and press, since it only demands them for the extreme Left. The resolution did this *only to remove in advance any possibility of misunderstanding the real nature of the movement.*

Since the beginning of the revolution, immediately after the very first days when the blood of the too-zealous officers was spilt, Kronstadt established the broadest freedom. The citizens were completely unlimited in the expression of their opinions. Only a few inveterate Tsarists remained in prison, but once the spontaneous rage was over, once reason began to prevail over the instinct of self-preservation, the question of general amnesty was raised in the meetings, so much did the people of Kronstadt hate prisons. Freedom for all prisoners was envisaged, but only in the vicinity of the city; at Kronstadt, reactionary deceptions could have no success, but the sailors did not want to furnish counter-revolutionaries to other localities. The actions of Kerensky provoked new anger and the project was abandoned. But this reversion to ill-temper was the last. From that time, Kronstadt did not know a single case of persecution for ideas. Every thesis could be freely circulated. The tribune of Anchor Square was open to all.

Petrichenko.

5. to liberate all Socialist political prisoners and also all workers, peasants, Red soldiers and sailors, imprisoned as a result of the workers' and peasants' movements;

6. to elect a commission for the purpose of examining the cases of those who are in prisons or concentration camps;

7. to abolish the 'political offices', since no political party should have privileges for propagating its ideas or receive money from the State for this purpose, and to replace them with educational and cultural commissions elected in each locality and financed by the government;

8. to abolish immediately all barriers;[1]

9. to make uniform the rations of all workers, except for those who are engaged in occupations dangerous to their health;

10. to abolish the Communist shock-troops in all units of the army and the Communist guards in the factories; in case of need, guard detachments could be supplied in the army by the companies and in the factories by the workers;

11. to give the peasants full freedom of action in regard to their land and also the right to possess cattle, on condition that they do their own work, that is to say, without hiring help;

12. to establish a travelling control commission;

13. to permit the free exercise of handicrafts, provided no hired help is used;

14. we ask all units of the army and the *kursanti* cadets to join our resolution;

15. we demand that all our resolutions be widely publicised in the press.

This resolution was adopted unanimously by the meeting of the crews of the Squadrons. Two persons abstained.

Signed: Petrichenko, president of the meeting: Perepelkin, secretary."

It is unfortunate that the translated text does not reflect the resolution's popular tone, its "rustic" style, its candid air, which are further proofs that the movement was entirely in the hands of the workers themselves, that it expressed precisely their ideas and aspirations, without outside influence or intrigue.

[1]This refers to the armed detachments around the cities, which were mentioned above. Their official duty was to suppress illicit commerce and confiscate food and other products. The irresponsibility and arbitrariness of these "barriers" had become proverbial in the country. It is significant that the government suppressed them the day before its attack on Kronstadt. In this way it sought to lull and deceive the Petrograd proletariat.

Since the term of the Kronstadt Soviet was about to expire, the meeting decided to call a conference of delegates from the ships, garrison, workshops, unions and various Soviet institutions for March 2nd, to discuss the details of new elections. This decision was perfectly in conformity with the Soviet constitution. The conference was officially and regularly announced in the *Izvestia,* the official organ of the Soviet.

On March 2nd, more than 300 delegates met in the Hall of Education, the former Engineers' School. The great majority of them belonged to no political party, and the Communists were in the minority. Nevertheless, according to custom, the reporter on the question: "The duties and tasks of the conference of delegates", was chosen from among them.

The meeting was opened by the sailor Petrichenko. It elected publicly a board of five members. One of these later declared that the members of the conference were exclusively sailors, Red soldiers, workers and Soviet employees. Naturally, there was not among the delegates a single "officer of the old régime" (an accusation later launched by the Petrograd Communists).

The business of the meeting was the new elections to the Soviet. It was desired that they be organised on a freer and more equitable basis, taking account of the resolution adopted the day before. A Soviet capable of fulfilling the tasks established therein was desired.

The spirit of the conference was "Soviet" in the full sense of the word. Kronstadt demanded Soviets free from all political influence, Soviets which would truly represent the aspirations of the workers and express their will. This did not prevent the delegates, who were adversaries of the arbitrary regime of bureaucratic Commissars but not of the Soviets, from being loyal, from sympathising with the Communist Party as such, or from desiring a peaceful solution for the urgent problems that existed.

But let us tell the story in the words of the Kronstadters themselves. Here is an account which appeared in the *Izvestia* of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Kronstadt, No. 9, March 11, 1921.

HOW THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE WAS CREATED

On March 1, at 2 p.m., a meeting of sailors, red soldiers and workers took place on Revolution Square, not arbitrarily but with the authorization of the Executive Committee of the Soviet.

There were 15,000 people at the meeting. It was presided over by Comrade Vassilieff, president of the Executive Committee. Comrade Kalinin, president of the All-Russian Executive, and Kuzmin, Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, attended.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the resolution previously adopted by the general meeting of the 1st and 2nd Squadrons, concerning the current situation and the ways to emerge from the present state of disorganization of the country.

This "resolution" is now known by everyone. It contains nothing which could threaten the power of the Soviets.

On the contrary, it clearly expresses the idea of the real power of the Soviets: the power of the workers and the peasants.

Comrades Kalinin and Kuzmin, who gave speeches, did not want to understand it. But their speeches had no echoes. They were not able to win over the masses, who are tormented to the point of anguish. And the meeting voted unanimously in favor of the resolution of the Squadrons.

The next day (March 2nd) with the knowledge and authority of the executive committee and in conformity with instructions published in the *Izvestia,* delegates from the ships, the garrison, the workshops and the unions, two from each organization, met in the Hall of Education (the former Engineers' School), in all more than three hundred persons.

The representatives of the authorities were perturbed. Some even left the city. In these conditions, the crew of the battleship *Petropavlovsk* felt obliged to assume guard of the building and protect the delegates against possible excesses, from whatever source they might come.

The conference was opened by Comrade Petrichenko. After the election of a board of five members, he gave the floor to Comrade Kuzmin, Commissar of the Baltic Fleet. Despite the very clear position taken by the garrison and the workers against the representatives of the Communist power, Comrade Kuzmin refused to recognize it.

The task of the conference was to find a peaceful solution to the existing situation. In particular, it had to create an organ by which the re-election of the Soviet could be effected on a more equitable basis, as the resolution had proclaimed. This task was all the more urgent since the powers of the preceding Soviet, composed almost entirely of Communists and clearly incapable of solving the absolutely vital problems, had come to the end of its term.

But instead of reassuring the delegates, Comrade Kuzmin, on the contrary antagonized them. He spoke of the equivocal position of Kron-

stadt, of the Polish danger, of all Europe which was watching us. He maintained that all was peaceful in Petrograd. He emphasized that he was in the hands of the delegates, who could shoot him if they wished. And, in conclusion, he declared: "If the delegates want an open armed conflict, they can have it. For the Communists do not give up power voluntarily. They fight to the finish."

This stupid speech of Comrade Kuzmin did nothing to calm the feelings of the delegates. On the contrary, it increased their irritation. As for the vague and colourless speech of the President of the Executive Committee, Vassilieff, who followed him, it passed unnoticed. The overwhelming majority of the delegates were manifestly hostile to the Communists.

Nevertheless, the delegates did not lose hope of finding some common ground with the representatives of the authorities. The appeal of the president of the conference to get to work and draw up an agenda for the day was unanimously approved . . .

The conference did not conceal its disapproval of the Communists. But when the question was raised whether the Communist delegates should remain at the conference to continue the common task with the non-party delegates, the meeting responded affirmatively. In spite of several protests and the proposal of some delegates to arrest the Communists, the delegates [as a whole] did not accept this position, considering that the Communists present were delegates of units and organizations just like the rest.

This fact proved again that the non-party delegates of the workers, as well as the Red soldiers, sailors and workers [of Kronstadt] themselves, did not consider the resolution adopted at the meeting of the day before as necessarily leading to a rupture with the Communists *as a party*. They still hoped to be able to find a common language.

Next at the suggestion of Comrade Petrichenko, the resolution of the preceding day was read. It was adopted by the overwhelming majority of the delegates. Then, at the very moment when the conference seemed ready to begin concrete work, the delegate of the battleship *Sebastopol* requested the floor for an urgent statement. He declared that fifteen truckloads of troops with rifles and machine-guns were on their way to the meeting place. Subsequent investigation revealed that this false news had been spread by the Communists to scuttle the conference. But at the time it was communicated—especially in view of the general tension and the hostile position taken by the representatives of the authorities towards the conference—all the circumstances led the delegates to believe it.

Nevertheless, the president's proposal to go on to a discussion of current business, taking the adopted resolution as a point of departure, was accepted. The conference began to discuss measures to be taken to implement the clauses of the resolution effectively. The idea of sending a delegation to Petrograd was voted down since its members would certainly be arrested. After this, several delegates proposed that the

board of the conference be constituted a Provisional Revolutionary Committee, and that it be in charge of preparing for the re-election of the Soviet.

At this moment, the president announced that a detachment of two thousand men was on its way to the meeting place. Very upset and excited, the anxious delegates left the Hall of Education. The session ending by reason of this last communication, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, which was in charge of maintaining order, installed itself on the battleship *Petropavlovsk* and there established its seat until the day when, thanks to its efforts, order could be assured in the city to the best interests of all the toilers—whether sailors, soldiers or workers.

We should add to this statement several details reported later by one of the members of the Revolutionary Committee. The decision to create this Committee, passed unanimously a few minutes before the closing of the session and under the influence of all the alarming rumours and of the threats of Kuzmin, Kalinin and Vassilieff, specified that "the Board of the conference and President Petrichenko be provisionally in charge of fulfilling the duties of a Revolutionary Committee during the time necessary to create such a committee in a more formal manner."

A further fact to be emphasised is that soon after the public meeting on March 1st, the Communists of Kronstadt began serious preparations for military action against the movement. The local Communist Committee, in particular, undertook to heavily arm the party members. It ordered the Commissar of the fortress to draw upon the arms supply and issue rifles, machine guns and ammunition to the Communist cells. It is beyond doubt that the Communist leaders of Kronstadt would have opened hostilities on March 2nd, and prevented the conference of delegates from meeting if an unforeseen circumstance had not thwarted their project.

Out of almost two thousand Communists enrolled at Kronstadt, the great majority were only card carriers who had joined the party for personal reasons and not from conviction. As soon as the resistance began, the mass of the Communists abandoned their leaders and joined the general movement. The chiefs alone, even with the support of a certain number of *kursanti*, stationed at Kronstadt and blindly devoted to the party, could not hope to resist the fleet, the garrison and the whole population. That is why the leaders abandoned the idea of an immediate armed conflict

inside Kronstadt. Some of them fled. Others went to the surrounding forts to try and arouse them against the movement. The *kursanti* followed them. They visited one fort after another, but found none of the support they sought. Finally, they went to Red Point (Krasnaia Gorka). It was thus that, on the evening of March 2nd, Kronstadt had no other power than that of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

On March 3rd, the first number of the *Izvestia* (News) of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee appeared. On the front page was a kind of manifesto, which read as follows:

"*To the population of the Fortress and City of Kronstadt.*

"Comrades and citizens, our country is going through a difficult period. For three years already, famine, cold and economic chaos have gripped us in their terrible vice. The Communist Party, which governs the country, has lost contact with the masses and has revealed itself powerless to pull them out of their condition of general collapse. The party has paid no attention to the disturbances which have taken place recently in Petrograd and Moscow and which have demonstrated clearly that it has lost the confidence of the working masses. Moreover, it has paid no attention to the demands presented by the workers. It considers them all to be the snares of the counter-revolution. It is deceiving itself profoundly.

"These disturbances and demands are the voices of the whole people, of all who labour. All the workers, sailors and Red soldiers see clearly today that only common efforts and a common will on the part of the workers can give the country bread, wood and coal, can clothe and warm the people, can get the Republic out of the impasse in which it finds itself.

"This will of all the workers, soldiers and sailors was clearly manifested at the great meeting of our city on Tuesday, March 1st. The meeting voted unanimously for the resolution of the crews of the 1st and 2nd Squadrons.

"One of the decisions adopted was to proceed immediately to the re-election of the Soviet. To establish more equitable bases for this election, of such a kind that the representation of the workers in the Soviet may be effective, and that the Soviet may be an active and energetic organ, the delegates of all organisations of the navy, the garrison and the workers met on March 2nd, at the Hall of Education. This meeting was to draw up a basis for the new elections and then begin a constructive and peaceful task, the work of reorganising the Soviet system.

"But, since, after threatening speeches by the representatives of power, they had reason to fear repression, the delegates decided to create a Provisional Revolutionary Committee and gave it full powers over the administration of the city and the forts. The Provisional Committee has its seat on the battleship *Petropavlovsk*.

"Comrades and Citizens! The Provisional Committee is primarily concerned with preventing bloodshed. It has made every effort to maintain revolutionary order in the city, in the fortress and in the forts.

"Comrades and Citizens do not stop work! Workers, remain at your machines. Sailors and soldiers, do not leave your posts. All employees, all institutions should keep on working.

"The Provisional Revolutionary Committee calls on all the workers' organisations, all the unions, maritime and otherwise, all the land and sea units, as well as all the citizens individually, to give their support. Its mission is to ensure, in fraternal co-operation with you, the necessary conditions for just and honest elections to the new Soviet. Therefore, comrades, let there be order, calm, composure. Let all perform their honest socialist work for the benefit of the workers.

Kronstadt, March 2nd, 1921. Signed: Petrichenko, chairman of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee; Toukin, secretary."

The same issue contained the famous resolution of the Squadrons, and also several administrative notes, including the following: "On March 2nd, by 9 p.m., all the Red units of the fortress and the majority of the forts declared their solidarity with the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. All institutions and communication services are guarded by the Committee's patrols."

* * *

The Bolsheviks did not lose an instant in preparing an attack on Kronstadt. From the beginning they realised that this movement could result in catastrophe for them. Therefore they decided to extinguish it at any cost, and as quickly as possible, before it could spread.

Simultaneously, they adopted several measures. 1. They hastened to assure their control of the important strategic points around Kronstadt and Petrograd, such as Red Point (Krasnaia Gorka), Oranienbaum, Lissy Noss, etc. 2. They maintained a state of siege in Petrograd and took extraordinary repressive military measures to safeguard "order". 3. They made certain concessions

—we have mentioned the suppression of the "barriers" around the capital—in order to calm the workers. 4. They proceeded, under Trotsky's supreme command, to organise rapidly a special army corps to attack Kronstadt. 5. They began a violent campaign of lies and slanders against the men of Kronstadt for the purpose of misleading public opinion and justifying their own actions.

This rabid propaganda began on March 2nd. In the second issue of the *Izvestia* of the (Kronstadt) Revolutionary Committee, on March 3rd, we find a news item [reproducing a radiogram sent out from Moscow and intercepted by the battleship *Petropavlovsk*. It ran as follows]:

"*Rosta Radio News, Moscow, March 3rd.*

"To all! To all! To all! To arms against the White-guard conspiracy!

"The mutiny of the ex-general Kozlovsky and the battleship *Petropavlovsk* has been organised by spies of the Entente, as was the case in numerous previous plots. This can be seen by reading the French bourgeois newspaper, *Le Matin*, which, two weeks before Kozlovsky's revolt, published the following telegram from Helsingfors: 'It has been learned from Petrograd that following the recent rebellion at Kronstadt, the Bolshevik military authorities have taken steps to isolate Kronstadt and prevent the Kronstadt sailors and soldiers from approaching Petrograd. The provisioning of Kronstadt has been stopped until order is restored.' It is clear that the secession of Kronstadt was directed by Paris, that the French counter-espionage is mixed up in it. Always the same story! The Social-Revolutionaries, directed by Paris, plot rebellion against the Soviet government, and as soon as their preparations are completed, the real master—a Tsarist general—makes his appearance. The story of Kolchak, who tried to regain power with the help of the Social-Revolutionaries, is repeated again. All the enemies of the workers, from the Tsarist general to the Social-Revolutionaries, try to speculate on hunger and cold. Naturally, this rebellion of the generals and the Social-Revolutionaries will be quickly suppressed and General Kozlovsky and his assistants will meet the same fate as Kolchak.

"But it is beyond doubt that the net of Allied espionage is not thrown over Kronstadt alone. Workers and Red soldiers, break that net! Unmask the spies and provocateurs! You must have composure, self-control, vigilance! Do not forget that the real way to overcome the food and other problems, which are temporary but certainly painful, is by intensive work and good judgment, and not by senseless excesses which can only add to the misery of the workers and the greater joy of their accursed enemies."

By every means at its disposal—military orders, proclamations, pamphlets, notices, articles in newspapers, radio bulletins, the government spread and imposed these unqualified lies. It must not be forgotten that, all means of propaganda and information being in its hands, no free voice could make the truth known.

In No. 4 of the Kronstadt *Izvestia* (March 6), we read the following:

COWARDS AND LIARS

We bring to everyone's knowledge the contents of a proclamation thrown over Kronstadt from a Communist plane.

The citizens feel nothing but contempt for this slanderous provocation.

The people of Kronstadt know how and by whom the hateful power of the Communists has been overthrown.

They know that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee is headed by elected, devoted militants—the best sons of the people: red soldiers, sailors and workers.

They will not let anyone shackle them, and least of all Tsarist generals or White guards.

"In a few more hours you will have to surrender," threaten the Communists.

Foul hypocrites, whom do you think you're fooling?

The Kronstadt garrison never surrendered to Tsarist admirals, and it will not surrender to Bolshevik generals.

You're cowards! You know our power and our will to triumph or to die proudly and not to run away like your Commissars, their pockets filled with Tsarist bank notes or gold, products of the labor and the blood of the workers.

The same issue of the *Izvestia* (No. 4) reproduced, for the edification of its readers, the following report broadcast by the Radio Station in Moscow:

MOSCOW RADIO

"To the deceived people of Kronstadt.

"Do you see where the rascals have led you? Here is your position. The greedy fangs of former Tsarist generals are already showing themselves behind the Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. All these Petrichenkos and Toukins are manipulated like puppets by the Tsarist general Kozlovsky, Captain Borkser, Kostromitinoff, Chirmanovsky and other proved White guards. They are duping you! They tell you that you are struggling for *democracy,* but two days have hardly passed and

you see that you are not really fighting for democracy but for Tsarist generals. You have permitted a new Wiren[1] to put a rope around your necks.

"They lie to you that Petrograd is with you, that Siberia and the Ukraine support you. All these are only cynical lies. The last sailor in Petrograd turned his back on you when he learned that Tsarist generals like Kozlovsky were among you. Siberia and the Ukraine firmly defend the Soviet power. Petrograd, the Red city, sneers at the pitiful pretensions of a handful of Social-Revolutionaries and White guardists.

"You are completely surrounded. In a few more hours you will have to surrender. Kronstadt has neither bread nor fuel. If you persist you will be shot like partridges. Naturally, all these generals—Kozlovsky and Borkser—all the wretches like Petrichenko and Toukin, will flee at the last moment to the White guardists in Finland. But you others, simple deceived sailors and Red soldiers, where will you go? If they are promising to provide for you in Finland, they are fooling you again. Don't you know that the soldiers of General Wrangel, led away to Constantinople, died like flies of hunger and disease? The same fate awaits you if you don't come to your senses immediately.

"Surrender right away, without losing a moment! Lay down your arms and come over to us! Disarm and arrest the criminal leaders, especially the Tsarist generals! The errors of anyone who surrenders immediately will be forgiven. Surrender immediately! *Petrograd Defence Committee.*"

The same insinuations were made in a radiogram of the Petrograd Soviet; the text is reproduced in the same issue of the *Izvestia,* preceded by the following introduction:

Station T.S.F. of the *Petropavlovsk* has intercepted the following radiogram, which confirms the fact that the Communists are continuing to deceive not only the workers and the red soldiers, but also the members of the Petrograd Soviet.

But they will not succeed in deceiving the Kronstadt garrison or its workers.

Finally, *Izvestia* No. 5 (March 7) communicates a new and very long Moscow radiogram.

Before reproducing it, the journal comments on it with a note headed: "They are still lying."

[1] Admiral Wiren was commander of Kronstadt at the time of the Revolution, and, as one of the most ferocious Tsarist officers, was shot by the sailors on Feb. 28th, 1917.

The journal refutes the Bolshevik inventions in the following terms:

We have just learned, according to the information of the Rosta radio, that everyone is in alliance with us—the Allies and the French spies, the White guards and the Tsarist generals, the Mensheviks, the Social-Revolutionaries, the Finnish bankers, in short, the whole world rushes down upon the poor Communists. And we, the Kronstadters, are the only ones who know nothing about it.

This document of Communist stupidity is frankly comical. We reproduce it to provide the people of Kronstadt with a few moments of fun.

Due to its length, we cannot reproduce the radiogram in its entirety. We limit ourselves to citing some typical passages:

". . . On March 2nd, the Labour and Defence Council ordered: 1. That the former General Kozlovsky and his partisans be declared outlaws; 2. That a state of war be declared in the city and province of Petrograd; 3. That supreme power over the whole district be placed in the hands of the Petrograd Committee . . .

"Petrograd is absolutely calm, and even the few factories where certain individuals have recently hurled accusations against the government have understood the provocation; they have realized where the agents of the Allies and the counter-revolution have dragged them . . .

"It is at the very moment when the Republican Party in America has just assumed power and shows itself disposed to resume commercial relations with Soviet Russia that the spreading of false rumours and the fomentation of disorders at Kronstadt are organized to impress the new American president and prevent a change of American policy in Russia.

"The conference in London is taking place at the same time. The spreading of such rumours seeks to influence the Turkish delegation and make it subservient to the requirements of the Allies. The revolt of the crew of the *Petropavlovsk* is without any doubt a stage in the great conspiracy to create internal difficulties in Soviet Russia and disturb the international situation. This plan is put into effect in Russia by a Tsarist general and by ex-officers with the support of Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries."

A name continually recurs in all these documents—that of a certain General Kozlovsky, the pretended leader and master of the movement. There was, in fact, at Kronstadt a Tsarist ex-General of the name of Kozlovsky. *It was Trotsky, the great restorer of ex-generals of the Tsar as military specialists, who put him there as an artillery expert.* While this person

was in the employ of the Bolsheviks, they closed their eyes to his past. But when Kronstadt revolted, they took advantage of the presence of their "specialist" to create a scapegoat.

In fact, Kozlovsky did not play any part in the events at Kronstadt, nor did his "aides," who were mentioned by the Bolsheviks—Borkser, Kostromitinoff and Chirmanovsky, one of whom was a simple draughtsman. But the Bolsheviks exploited their names skilfully to denounce the sailors as enemies of the Republic and present their movement as counter-revolutionary. Communist agitators were sent into the mills and factories of Petrograd and Moscow to call upon them to take a stand against Kronstadt, "that nest of the White conspiracy, directed by General Kozlovsky," and "to associate themselves with the support and defense of the Workers' and Peasants' Government against the White guard rebellion at Kronstadt."

Kozlovsky himself could only shrug his shoulders when he learned of the role which the Bolsheviks made him play in the events. He said later that the Bolshevik commander of the fortress had fled soon after the establishment of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. According to the Bolshevik rules, it was the artillery chief—General Kozlovsky as it happened—who should have replaced him. But since these rules were no longer in force, the Communist power being replaced by that of the Revolutionary Committee, Kozlovsky refused to accept the post. The Revolutionary Committee therefore designated another specialist, a certain Solovianoff, as commander of the fortress. As for Kozlovsky, he was put in charge of directing the technical services of the artillery. His "aides," absolutely insignificant persons, also remained entirely outside the movement.

At the same time, by a historical irony, it was an important Tsarist ex-officer, the famous Tuchachevsky (later shot by the order of Stalin) who assumed, at Trotsky's direction, the command of the forces destined to act against Kronstadt. Furthermore, all the "specialists" and sentinels of Tsarism who had gone over to the service of the Bolsheviks participated in drawing up the plan of the siege and the attack on Kronstadt. As for the men of Kronstadt, who were so slan-

dered by their cynical opponents, they had at their disposal, as technical and military experts, the pallid figure of Kozlovsky and three or four other persons who were absolute nonentities from a political point of view.

The Kronstadt movement broke out spontaneously. If this movement had been the result of a plan conceived and prepared in advance, it would certainly not have occurred at the beginning of March, the least favourable time. A few weeks later, and Kronstadt, freed of ice, would have become an almost impregnable fortress, having at its disposal a powerful fleet, a terrible threat to Petrograd. Supplied from abroad, Kronstadt could not only have held out for a long time, but it might even have conquered. The greatest opportunity of the Bolshevik government was precisely the spontaneity of the movement and the absence of any premeditation, of any calculation, in the action of the sailors.

There was no "revolt" at Kronstadt, in the true sense of the word. There was a spontaneous and peaceful movement, absolutely legitimate and natural in the given circumstances, which rapidly embraced the whole city, the garrison and the fleet. Frightened for their power, their positions and their privileges, the Bolsheviks forced events and obliged Kronstadt to accept an armed struggle.

Naturally, Kronstadt did its best to reply to the Bolshevik insinuations and slanders. Through its newspaper and its radio stations, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee made known to the labouring masses of Russia and the world the real goals and aspirations of their movement, at the same time refuting the lies of the Communist government. Thus *Izvestia* No. 4, for March 6th, reproduced the following radio appeal of the Revolutionary Committee:

> To all! To all! To all! Comrades, workers, Red soldiers and sailors!
>
> Here, in Kronstadt, we know how you suffer—you, your wives and your starving children—under the yoke of the Communist dictatorship.
>
> We have overthrown the Communist Soviet. In a few days, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee will proceed to the election of a new Soviet which, freely chosen, will accurately reflect the will of all the working population and the garrison, and not that of a handful of crazy "communists."
>
> Our cause is just. We are for the power of the Soviets and not that

of the parties. We are for the free election of the representatives of the working masses. The false Soviets, monopolized and manipulated by the Communist Party, have always been deaf to our needs and our requests: the only response that we have received has been the assassin's bullet.

Now, your patience, the patience of the workers, being at an end, they want to stop your mouths with sops. By order of Zinoviev, the barriers are suppressed in Petrograd province, and Moscow allocates ten million gold roubles to buy food and articles of primary necessity abroad. But we know that the proletariat of Petrograd will not let itself be bought with these sops. Over the heads of the Communists, revolutionary Kronstadt extends its hand and offers you its fraternal assistance.

Comrades, not only are they fooling you, but they are impudently distorting the truth, they are resorting to the vilest falsifications. Comrades do not let yourselves be deceived. At Kronstadt, power is exclusively in the hands of the revolutionary sailors, soldiers and workers, and not in those of the "counter-revolutionaries directed by one Kozlovsky," as the lying Moscow radio tries to make you believe.

Do not hesitate, comrades! Unite with us! Establish contact with us! Demand that your non-party delegates be authorized to come to Kronstadt. They alone can tell you the truth and unmask the shameful slander about "Finnish bread" and the snares of the allies.

Long live the revolutionary proletariat of the cities and the fields! Long live the power of freely elected Soviets!

In *Izvestia* No. 10, on March 12th, the Committee issued the following specific refutation of the story of Kronstadt being dominated by Tsarist generals:

OUR GENERALS

The Communists insinuate that White-guard generals and officers, and a priest, are among the members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. In order to put an end to these lies, once and for all, we bring to their attention that the Committee is composed of the following fifteen members:

1. Petrichenko, yeoman 1st class, on board the *Petropavlovsk.*
2. Yakovenko, telephone operator of the Kronstadt district.
3. Ossossonoff, mechanic on the *Sebastopol.*
4. Arhipoff, quartermaster mechanic.
5. Perepelkin, mechanic on the *Sebastopol.*
6. Patrouchev, quartermaster mechanic on the *Petropavlovsk.*
7. Koupoloff, medical orderly, first class.
8. Verchinin, seaman on the *Sebastopol.*
9. Toukin, electrical worker.
10. Romanenko, guard at the ship-repair shops.

11. Orechin, employee at the 3rd technical school.
12. Valk, carpenter.
13. Pavloff, worker in the mine workshop.
14. Baikoff, carter.
15. Kilgast, steersman.

Reproducing the same list on March 14th (No. 12), the paper concluded with this ironical remark: "Such are our generals, our Brusiloffs, Kameneffs, etc.[1] The policemen Trotsky and Zinoviev are concealing the truth from you."

In their campaign of slander the Bolsheviks sought not only to distort the spirit and goal of the movement, but also the acts of the men of Kronstadt. Thus they spread the rumour that the Communists in Kronstadt suffered all kinds of violence at the hands of the "mutineers." Repeatedly, Kronstadt reiterated the truth about this matter. In No. 2 of *Izvestia,* for example, there is the following note:

> The Provisional Revolutionary Committee is anxious to give the lie to the rumours according to which the arrested Communists have been subjected to violence. The arrested Communists are completely safe.
>
> Furthermore, of the several Communists arrested, some have been set free. A representative of the Communist Party will be a member of the commission for investigating the reasons for the arrests. The Communist comrades Ilin, Kabanoff and Pervouchin have applied to the Revolutionary Committee and have been authorized to visit the prisoners confined on the *Petropavlovsk.* These comrades confirm the above and sign their names. Signed: Ilin, Kabanoff, Pervouchin. Signed, for a fair copy: N. Arhipoff, member of the Revolutionary Committee. Signed, for the secretary: P. Bogdanoff.

The same issue also published, over the signature of the above Communists, an "Appeal of the Provisional Board of the Kronstadt Section of the Communist Party." For comprehensible reasons, the terms of this "Appeal" addressed to the Communists are prudent and vague. Nevertheless, it includes

[1]The Bolshevik generals Brusiloff, Kameneff and others were former Tsarist generals.

the following significant passage:

Do not give any credence to the false rumours which maintain that responsible Communists have been shot, and that the Communists intend to rebel at Kronstadt with arms in hand. These are lies propagated with the intention of provoking bloodshed. The Provisional Board of the Communist Party recognises the necessity of new elections for the Soviet and it requests the members of the party to remain at their posts and put no obstacles in the way of the measures of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. Provisional Board of the Kronstadt Section of the Communist Party: Signed—J. Ilin, A. Kabanoff, F. Pervouchin.

Various answers were given in brief notes, which appeared from time to time under the title: *Their Lies.*

In *Izvestia* No. 7 (March 9), we read:

THEIR LIES

The commander of the army which is operating against Kronstadt has just communicated the following report to a writer in *The Red Commander:*

"We are informed that the civil population of Kronstadt is receiving hardly any provisions. The sharpshooters' regiment in the Kronstadt garrison refuses to join the mutineers and has resisted an attempt to disarm them. The principal leaders of the rebellion are getting ready to flee to Finland. A non-party sailor fleeing from Kronstadt states that at the meeting of the sailors at Kronstadt on March 4th, the floor was taken by General Kozlovsky. In his speech, he demanded strong power and decisive action against the partisans of the Soviets.

"At Kronstadt, morale is low. The population is depressed. It is waiting impatiently for the end of the rebellion and asks that the White guard leaders be turned over to the Soviet government."

That is what the Communists are telling about the events; such are the means to which they have recourse in order to sully our movement in the eyes of the labouring people.

In Number 12 (March 14):

THEIR LIES

We reproduce verbatim the notes which have appeared in the March 11th issue of the Petrograd *Pravda:*

"Armed struggle at Kronstadt. The following communication was received yesterday at 8 p.m. by the Defence Committee from Comrade Tukhachevsky, Commander of the Army at present at Oranienbaum: Heavy firing has been heard at Kronstadt—rifle shots and machine-gun

fire. Through field glasses, troops could be seen attacking, in dispersed ranks, near the mine workshop situated to the north east of the Constantin fort. It is supposed that the object of the attack was either the Constantin fort or detachments revolting against the White guards and entrenched in the vicinity of the mine workshop.

"*A Fire at Kronstadt.* At the moment when we were taking Fort N., a great fire was observed at Kronstadt. A thick cloud of smoke enveloped the city.

"*More on the Inspirers and Leaders of the Rebellion.* A refugee who left Kronstadt on the night of March 7th has made the following statement on the spirit and the attitude of the White guard officers: They are very jovial. They are not at all worried about the bloodshed they have provoked. They dream of the pleasures which await them when they take Petrograd. 'Once Petrograd is in our hands, there will be at least half a pood of gold apiece. And if we lose, we can save ourselves by going to Finland where we will be received with open arms.' That is what these gentlemen declare. They feel themselves complete masters of the situation. And in fact they are. Their attitude towards the sailors does not differ in the least from that of the old Tsarist days. 'These are real leaders, not like the Communists,' the sailors say of them. They only lack the gold epaulettes.

"We make it known to the White guard officers that they should not count too heavily on flight to Finland, and that they will receive not gold, but a nice portion of lead."

In addition to the above, the *Red Journal* reports: "Two sailors coming from Reval state that 150 Bolsheviks have been killed in Kronstadt." That is how history is written. And that is how the Communists try to hide the truth from the people by means of lies and slanders.

In Number 13 (March 15):

THEIR LIES

We reproduce the following from the *Red Journal:*

"Oranienbaum, March 11th. It has been confirmed that at Kronstadt the sailors have revolted against the mutineers.

"Oranienbaum, March 12th. Yesterday, men were seen sneaking over the ice from Kronstadt towards the Finnish coast. Likewise, men were seen coming from Finland towards Kronstadt. This proves that contact exists between Kronstadt and Finland.

"Oranienbaum, March 12th. The Red pilots who flew over Kronstadt yesterday report that they saw hardly anyone in the streets. All guards and observers are missing. No further contact with Finland was observed.

"Oranienbaum, March 11th. The refugees from Kronstadt report that the morale of the sailors is very low. The leaders of the mutiny have lost all confidence in the sailors, so much so that the latter are no

longer admitted into the artillery. This is manned by the officers, who hold the real power. The sailors are almost entirely eliminated from it.

"*Firing from Kronstadt.* According to information received today, intense firing took place at Kronstadt. Rifle and machine-gun fire was heard. Apparently a revolt has broken out."

While dishonestly accusing the people of Kronstadt of excesses and violence, the Bolsheviks themselves behaved in an absolutely dishonourable way.

"Three days ago," we read in an editorial of *Izvestia* No. 3, March 5th, "Kronstadt got rid of the monstrous power of the Communists, as the city got rid of the Tsar and his generals four years ago. For three days, the citizens of Kronstadt have breathed freely, delivered from the dictatorship of the party.

"The Communist leaders of Kronstadt fled shamefully like guilty urchins. They feared for their skins. They supposed that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee would have recourse to the methods of the Cheka and put them to death. Vain fears! The Provisional Revolutionary Committee does not exact vengeance. It does not threaten anyone.

"All the Communists of Kronstadt are free. No danger threatens them. Only those who tried to flee and fell into the hands of our patrols have been arrested. But even these are safe, secure from the eventual vengeance of the people who might try to make them pay for the 'Red Terror.' The families of the Communists are safe from any attack as are all the citizens.

"In view of this, what is the attitude of the Communists? In the leaflet which they dropped from an aeroplane yesterday, it says that many persons have been arrested in Petrograd, people having no connection with the events at Kronstadt. Worse than that, even their families were thrown into prison.

" 'The Defence Committee,' says the leaflet, 'declares that all these prisoners are held as hostages for the comrades arrested by the mutineers at Kronstadt, particularly for the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, N. Kuzmin, the President of the Kronstadt Soviet, Comrade Vassilieff, and several others. The hostages will pay with their lives for the slightest injury suffered by our arrested comrades.'

"That is how the Defence Committee ends its proclamation. It is the rage of the impotent. The torturing of innocent families adds no new laurels to the fame of the Communist comrades. And, in any case, it will not be by such methods that they can regain the power which the sailors, Red soldiers and workers of Kronstadt have taken from them."

Kronstadt replied to the statements of the Communists with the following radiogram, which was reproduced in *Izves-*

tia No. 5, on March 7th:

"In the name of the Kronstadt garrison, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee demands that the families of the workers, sailors and Red soldiers held as hostages by the Petrograd Soviet be set free within 24 hours.

"The Kronstadt garrison declares that the Communists in Kronstadt enjoy complete freedom and that their families are safe from any danger. The example of the Petrograd Soviet will not be followed here, because we consider such methods as the holding of hostages to be most vile and most despicable, even when provoked by the rage of despair. History knows no like ignominy.

"Petrichenko, President of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee; Kilgast, secretary."

The Defence Committee was ruthless in Petrograd, which was inundated with troops brought in from the provinces, and subjugated to a reign of terror under the guise of "the state of seige." The Committee took systematic measures to "clean up" the city. Many workers, soldiers and sailors suspected of sympathy with Kronstadt were imprisoned. All the sailors of Petrograd, and various regiments of the army, considered "politically unreliable," were sent to distant regions.

Directed by its President, Zinovieff, the Committee assumed complete control of the city and province of Petrograd. The whole northern district was declared in a state of war, and all meetings were forbidden. Extraordinary precautions were taken to protect the government institutions, and machine guns were placed in the Astoria Hotel, occupied by Zinovieff and other high Bolshevik functionaries.

A great nervousness reigned in the city. New strikes broke out and persistent rumours were spread regarding workers' uprisings in Moscow and peasant revolts in the East and in Siberia. The population, which could have no confidence in the press, listened avidly to the most extreme rumours, even when they were manifestly false. All eyes were on Kronstadt, in the expectation of important happenings.

Meanwhile, notices posted on the walls ordered the strikers back to their employment, prohibited the suspension of work, and forbade the population from meeting in the streets. "In the event of a gathering," they read, "the troops will use arms, and in case of resistance the order is to shoot on the

spot."

Petrograd was powerless to act. Subjugated to the most disgraceful terror, obliged to keep silent, the capital put all its hopes in Kronstadt.

From the first days of the movement, Kronstadt undertook the task of internal organization. It was a vast and urgent task, for many problems had to be dealt with at once.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee, whose seat was first on board the *Petropavlovsk,* soon moved to the People's House, in the centre of Kronstadt, so that, in the words of *Izvestia,* it would be "in closer contact with the population." Moreover, its membership, which was only five at the beginning, was considered insufficient to deal with all the needs of the hour, and it was soon increased to fifteen. Of the first activities of the enlarged Committee at its meeting on the 4th March, *Izvestia* published the following report:

"The meeting proceeded to the business of the day. It was disclosed that the city and the garrison were adequately supplied with food and fuel.

"The question of arming the workers was then taken up. It was decided that all the workers, without exception, should be armed and put in charge of guarding the interior of the city, since the sailors and soldiers wished to take their places in the combat units. This decision was received with enthusiastic approval . . .

"It was then decided to re-elect, within three days, the administrative commissions of all the unions and also of the Council of Unions. The latter would become the principal organ of the workers and would be in permanent contact with the Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

"After this, the sailors who had been able to escape, with much risk, from Petrograd, Peterhof and Oranienbaum gave reports on the situation there. They stated that the population and workers of all these localities were kept by the Communists in complete ignorance of what was happening in Kronstadt. Rumours were being spread everywhere that the White Guards and generals were active at Kronstadt. This communication aroused general laughter."

But the Revolutionary Committee and the various other organizations that were created at this time were not the only channels of action. The whole population became intensely animated and participated with new energy in the work of reconstruction. The revolutionary enthusiasm equalled that of the October days. For the first time since the Communist

Party had taken over the Revolution, Kronstadt felt free. A new spirit of solidarity and fraternity reunited the sailors, the soldiers of the garrison, the workers and all other elements in a common effort for the common cause. Even the Communists were affected by the contagion of this fraternity of the whole city, and participated in the preparations for the election of the Kronstadt Soviet.

The pages of *Izvestia* give abundant proof of this general enthusiasm, which re-appeared once the masses felt they had regained, in the free Soviets, the true road to emancipation and the hope of achieving the real revolution. The paper abounded in notices, resolutions and appeals of all sorts, from individual citizens and from various groups and organizations, in which full rein was given to this enthusiasm, to the feeling of solidarity and devotion, to the desire to act usefully and take part in the common task.

The principle of "equal rights for all, privileges for none" was established and rigorously maintained. Food rations were equalized. The sailors, who under the Bolsheviks had received a much larger ration, decided not to accept any more than what was given to the workers and the citizens. Special rations were only given to the sick and to children.

We have just said that the general excitement affected the Communists. In fact, it reversed the opinions of many of them. The pages of *Izvestia* contained many declarations from Communist groups and organizations in Kronstadt which condemned the attitude of the central government and supported the line of conduct and the measures taken by the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. But even stronger evidence than that was given of a change in Communist attitudes within the city. A very large number of Kronstadt Communists publicly announced their departure from the party. In several issues of *Izvestia,* hundreds of names of Communists were published whose consciences forbade them to stay in the same party as the hangman Trotsky, as several put it. The resignations from the party soon became so numerous that the paper, for lack of space, had to stop announcing them and declared that it could mention them only in groups and then only when space permitted. One got the impression of a general exodus.

Several letters taken at random from a great number give

an adequate impression of this sudden and significant change.

I realize that the policy of the Communist Party has brought the country to an impossible impasse. The party has become bureaucratic. It has learned nothing and wants to learn nothing. It refuses to listen to the voice of the masses and tries to impose its own will on them. (Think of the 115 million peasants!) It will not understand that only freedom of speech and the possibility for the masses to participate in the reconstruction of the country with the aid of modified electoral procedures can awaken the people from their lethargy.

I refuse henceforth to consider myself a member of the Communist Party. I entirely approve of the resolution adopted at the meeting of all the people on March 1st, and consequently I place all my abilities and energy at the disposal of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. I request that this declaration be published in the paper.

Herman Kanaiev, officer of the Red Army
son of an exile of the trial of the 193.
(Izvestia No. 3, March 5th)

* * *

Comrade Communists of the rank and file! Look around and you will see that we are stuck fast in a terrible morass. We have been led there by a handful of "Communist" bureaucrats who, under the disguise of Communists, have occupied the warmest nests in our Republic.

As a Communist, I beseech you to get rid of these false "Communists" who are pushing you towards fratricide. It is thanks to them that we others, rank and file Communists, who are not responsible for anything, must undergo the reproaches of our comrades, the non-party workers and peasants.

I am alarmed at the existing situation. Is it possible that the blood of our brothers will be spilt for the interests of these "Communist" bureaucrats? Comrades, come to your senses! Do not let yourselves be used by these bureaucrats who provoke and push you into the butchery. Show them the door. A real Communist should not impose his ideas, but march with the whole working mass, in the same ranks as they.

Rojkali, member of the Russian
Communist Party (Bolshevik)
(Izvestia No. 7, March 9th)

* * *

Seeing that in reply to a proposal of the Kronstadt comrades to send a delegation to Petrograd, Trotsky and the Communist chiefs have sent over the first shells and have spilled blood, I request that I no longer be considered a member of the Communist Party. The speeches of Communist orators turned my head, but the acts of the Communist bureaucrats have turned it back again.

I thank the Communist bureaucrats for having shown their true face and for having thus permitted me to see my error. I was a blind

instrument in their hands.

Andre Bratachev, ex-member of the
Communist Party No. 537,575
(Izvestia No. 7, March 9th)

* * *

Considering that the present terrible situation is the result of the acts of an insolent handful of Communists solidly installed at the head of the party, and in view of the fact that I joined the party under pressure, as a rank-and-file militant, I observe with horror the fruit of their activities. Only the workers and peasants can save the country, which has been brought to ruin, but the Communist party which is in power has completely deceived them. For this reason I am leaving the party and giving my strength to the defence of the working masses.

L. Koroleff, Commander of the 5th Batt., 4th Division
(Izvestia No. 7, March 9th)

* * *

Comrades, and my dear pupils of the industrial, military and naval schools! I have lived nearly thirty years with a deep love for the people. To the best of my ability I have brought light and knowledge to all who wanted to learn. The 1917 Revolution gave me new enthusiasm. My activity increased. I worked harder than ever to serve my ideal. The Communist slogan, "Everything for the people" inspired me by its nobility and beauty, and in February 1920 I became an applicant for membership in the Communist Party. But the first shot fired against the peaceful people, against my dear children, of whom there are 7,000 in Kronstadt, has made me tremble with horror to think that I might be considered an accomplice in the shedding of these innocents' blood. I know that I cannot any longer believe in or propagate an idea that has been dishonoured by criminal action. Therefore, from the first shot I ceased to consider myself a member of the Communist Party.

Maria Nikolaievna Chatel, teacher.
(Izvestia No. 8, March 10th)

* * *

Since, in reply to the proposition of the Kronstadt comrades to send delegates to Petrograd, Trotsky sent an aeroplane loaded with bombs which were dropped on innocent women and children, since, moreover, they are shooting honest workers everywhere, we rank-and-file Communists of the electrical crew of the Third Region, profoundly indignant at the actions of Trotsky and his agents and at their behaving like wild beasts, are leaving the Communist Party and joining all the honest workers in the common struggle for the workers' emancipation. We request that we be considered out of the party.

(17 signatures follow–*Izvestia* No. 8, March 10th)

* * *

For three years I have worked at Kronstadt as an instructor in the primary school and also in the army and naval units. I have always honestly marched with the workers of free Kronstadt giving them all my powers in the field of public education. The great enthusiasm for culture professed by the Communists, the class struggle of the workers against the exploiters, and the perspectives of Soviet construction, drew me into the ranks of the Communist Party. I became an applicant for membership on February 1st, 1920. Since my application I have observed many serious faults in the party hierarchy. I have come to the conclusion that these faults pollute the beautiful idea of Communism. The more serious faults, which have impressed the masses very unfavourably, are: bureaucracy, the rupture between the party and the masses, the party's dictatorial procedures in relation to the latter, the great number of careerists, etc. All these faults widen the bottomless abyss between the masses and the party, transforming the latter into an organ powerless to struggle against the country's internal downfall.

The present events have uncovered the most horrible evils in the regime. When the people of Kronstadt, which has several thousand inhabitants, presented their entirely just demands to the "defenders of the interests of the workers," the bureaucratized hierarchy of the Communist Party rejected them, and, instead of reaching a free and fraternal agreement with the Kronstadt workers, opened a fratricidal fire against the workers, sailors and Red soldiers of the revolutionary city. And—this was the last straw—the dropping of bombs by aeroplanes on defenceless women and children added a fine laurel to the Communist Party's crown.

Not wanting to share responsibility for the barbarous acts of the Communists, and disapproving of the tactics of their hierarchy, which has resulted in bloodshed and the extreme suffering of the masses, I declare openly that I no longer consider myself an applicant for Communist Party membership and entirely accept the slogan of the Kronstadt workers: "All power to the Soviets and not to the parties."

T. Denisoff, instructor at the Second Primary School
(Izvestia No. 10, March 12th)

* * *

Without violence or bloodshed, the power of the Communist Party, which had lost the confidence of the masses, passed at Kronstadt to the hands of the revolutionary workers. Nevertheless, the central Government blockaded Kronstadt. It spread lying proclamations and radio messages, trying to impose its power by hunger, cold and treason.

We consider such tactics treason to the basic principles of the Social Revolution: "All power to the workers." By this treason, the Communists in power have taken the side of the enemies of the workers. For us there is now only one choice, to remain at our posts and struggle relentlessly against all those who try to impose their power on the working masses by violence, treason and provocation. We are therefore break-

ing off all relations with the party.

Miloradovitch, Bezsonoff, Markoff,
ex-members of the Communist Party
(Izvestia No. 10, March 12th)

* * *

Revolted by the behaviour of the great lord Trotsky, who did not hesitate to stain his hands with the blood of his comrade workers, I consider it my moral duty to leave the party and publish my declaration.

V. Grabedeff, candidate for party membership,
President of the Building Workers' Union
(Izvestia No. 10, March 12th)

Finally, we reproduce some instructive excerpts drawn from declarations of the same type. These excerpts give a very clear idea of the spirit and the attitudes which prevailed everywhere:

We, the undersigned . . . were members of the Communist Party, because we considered it an emanation of the will of the working masses. But in reality it has shown itself to be the hangman of workers and peasants . . .

(Izvestia No. 5, March 7)

* * *

We, candidates to the Communist Party . . . unanimously declare our solidarity, not with the authorities, but entirely with the just cause of the workers . . .

(Izvestia No. 7, March 9)

* * *

The parties have been preoccupied with politics. But when the Civil War was over, people wanted the party to turn to economic life and to make headway in the reconstruction of the country's ruined economy.

The peasant does not need Commissars to understand that he must give bread to the city; and the worker, in turn, will do all he can to furnish the peasant with everything the peasant needs for his work.

(Izvestia No. 11, March 13)

* * *

PRISONERS' RESOLUTION

On March 14th, the general assembly of *kursanti,* officers and Red soldiers, numbering 240, who had been taken prisoner and interned in the Riding School, adopted the following resolution:

"On March 8th, we, *kursanti,* officers and Red soldiers of Mos-

cow and Petrograd, received the order to attack the city of Kronstadt. We were told that the White Guards had started a mutiny. When, without using our arms, we approached the outskirts of the city and made contact with the advance guard of the sailors and workers, we realized that no White Guard mutiny existed at Kronstadt, but, on the contrary, that the sailors and workers had overthrown the absolutist power of the Commissars. Soon, we went over voluntarily to the side of the people of Kronstadt, and now we request the Revolutionary Committee to place us in combat units, for we want to fight beside the real defenders of the workers and peasants, both of Kronstadt and of all Russia.

"We consider that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee has taken the correct course for the emancipation of all the workers, and that only the idea of 'All power to the Soviets and not to the parties' can complete the work that has been so well begun."

(Izvestia No. 14, March 16th)

* * *

We, soldiers of the Red Army from the fort Krasnoarmeietz, are body and soul with the Revolutionary Committee. We will defend the Committee, the workers and the peasants to the end. No one can believe the lies in the Communist proclamations which have been dropped by aeroplane. We have neither generals nor masters here. Kronstadt has always been the city of the workers and peasants, and it will continue to be so.

The Communists say that we are misled by spies. This is a barefaced lie. We have always defended the liberties conquered by the revolution, and we will always defend them. If anyone wants to convince themselves of this, let him send a delegation to us. As for the generals, they are in the service of the Communists.

At the present moment, when the fate of the country is in doubt, we who have taken power into our hands and have given supreme command to the Revolutionary Committee declare to the whole garrison, and to all the workers that we are ready to die for the liberty of the working people. Freed from the Communist yoke and from the terror of the past years, we prefer to die rather than retreat a single step.

Detachment of Fort Krasnoarmeietz
(Izvestia No. 5, March 7th)

A passionate love for a free Russia and an unlimited faith in the "true Soviets" inspired Kronstadt. To the end, the *Kronstadtzi* hoped to be supported by Petrograd first of all and then by the whole of Russia, and to be able thus to achieve the complete liberation of the country. The following manifesto was typical of their attitude:

"Comrades, sailors, workers and Red soldiers of the city of Kronstadt!

"We, the garrison of fort Totleben, send you our fraternal greetings at this grim and tragic hour of our glorious struggle against the hated yoke of the Communists. All of us are ready, as one man, to die for the emancipation of our suffering brothers, the peasants and workers of all Russia, chained again in hateful slavery to violence and deception. We hope that soon, by determination, we shall be able to break the circle of enemies around the fortress into a thousand pieces and carry the real truth and real freedom across our land."

This note appeared in the last number of the Kronstadt *Izvestia* (No. 14), on March 16th, 1921. The enemy was at the gates of Kronstadt. Petrograd and the rest of the country, terrified by a formidable massing of military and police forces, was manifestly impotent to break the vice. Very little hope remained for the heroic handful of defenders in the fortress, attacked by a huge army of *kursanti,* blindly devoted to the government. Yet, carried away by their great ideal, by the purity of their motives, by their fervent faith in imminent liberation, the men of Kronstadt continued to hope and to fight the unequal battle.

They had not wanted an armed struggle. They had sought to resolve the conflict by peaceful and fraternal means, by free re-election of the Soviets, by an understanding with the Communists, by persuasion and free action among the working masses. The fratricidal struggle was imposed on them, but as events unfolded they became more and more determined to fight to the end for their just and noble cause.

A significant aspect of their attitude was the way in which they regarded the question of help in their action. They received offers from various sources, notably from the Right Social-Revolutionaries. But they refused all aid coming from that direction. As for the leftist groups, they only accepted their aid when it was offered in a spirit of freedom and sincerity, in devotion and fraternity and when it had no political ties. They welcomed the collaboration of friends, but they accepted no pressure, no "dictation."[1]

[1]One of the delegations sent by the Revolutionary Committee to Petrograd had as its aim the bringing to Kronstadt of two Anarchists who were intimately known there Comrade Yartchuk (author of a well-known book) and myself. The Provisional Revolutionary Com-

"A huge army of *kursanti,* blindly devoted to the government," surrounded Kronstadt.

Fourteen numbers of the *Izvestia* of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee appeared during the revolt, from the 3rd to the 16th of March. The noble, burning aspirations of the rebels for a new and truly free life for Kronstadt and for all Russia, their sublime devotion and their firm resolve to defend themselves "to the last drop of blood" in the fight that was imposed upon them, all these essential qualities were faithfully reflected in a series of articles in their paper which explained their position, formulated their objectives, sought to convince the blind and the misled, and replied as we have already seen, to the slanders and the hostile acts of the Communists.

We have run through these historic pages, which now are almost entirely unknown. They should be read and re-read by the workers of all countries, in order to put them on their guard against the fundamental errors which lost the Russian Revolution of 1917 and which threaten in advance the Revolution that may come in other countries—i.e. action under the aegis of political parties; the reconstruction of political power; the installation of a new government; the organization of a centralized state, under new slogans empty of real content, such as "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," "Proletarian Government," "Workers' and Peasants' State," etc. These newspapers, like the epic of Kronstadt itself, prove *conclusively* that what belongs really to *the workers and peasants* can be *neither governmental nor statist,* and that what is *governmental and statist* can belong *neither to the workers nor the peasants.*

The first issue of the Kronstadt *Izvestia* (March 3, 1921) contains, in addition to information and administrative notes, the Manifesto "To the Population of the Fortress and of the City of Kronstadt," and the famous sailors' "Resolution," which we have already cited.

The second issue (of March 4), which contains the Mos-

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mittee wanted us to come and help them in their task. They did not yet know in Kronstadt that we were both imprisoned by the Bolsheviks This fact, slight as it is, is another proof of the independence and the revolutionary tendency of Kronstadt. A counter-revolutionary movement would never seek the collaboration of Anarchists. Moreover, the president of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, Petrichenko, was himself an Anarchist sympathiser.

cow radiogram (cited earlier) also contains the following significant appeal:

To the Population of the City of Kronstadt

Citizens, Kronstadt is beginning a hard fight for freedom. At any moment, we can expect a Communist offensive for the purpose of retaking Kronstadt and reimposing on us their power, which has led to famine, cold and economic breakdown.

All of us, to the last man, will defend the liberty we have won, with force and determination. We will resist the plan to subjugate Kronstadt, and if the Communists try to do it by force of arms, we will reply with a worthy resistance.

The Provisional Committee calls upon the population not to be disturbed if they hear firing. Calm and composure will bring us victory.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee

We have already quoted everything of interest in No. 3 (of March 5), except for the usual notes, declarations and information. We can nevertheless add the following paragraph:

Complete order reigns in Kronstadt. All institutions are functioning normally. The streets are full of people. Not a shot has been fired for three days.

No. 4 (of March 6th), in addition to the material cited earlier, contains the following editorial:

The calloused hands of the sailors and workers of Kronstadt have seized the rudder from the hands of the Communists and have taken possession of the helm. The Soviet ship will be sailed safely and competently to Petrograd, from which this power of the workers' hands shall spread throughout unhappy Russia.

But comrades, take care! Double your watches, for the course is full of reefs. A careless turn of the rudder and your ship, with its precious mission of social reconstruction, may run on to a rock.

Comrades, look to the rudder—your enemies are already trying to seize it! A single error and they will succeed, and the Soviet ship will founder to the triumphant laughter of the Tsarist lackeys and the agents of the bourgeoisie.

Comrades, at this moment you are rejoicing in a great and peaceful victory over the dictatorship of the Communists. But your enemies also are rejoicing. You and they are joyful for opposite reasons. You are filled with a burning desire to re-establish the real power of the Soviets,

with the noble hope of seeing the worker work freely and the peasant enjoy the right of disposing of the products of his labour on his own land. They dream of re-establishing the knout of Tsarism and the privileges of the generals.

Your interests are different. They are not your comrades. You have had to get rid of the Communist power to begin a creative task of peaceful reconstruction. They want to maintain this power so that the workers and peasants may be their slaves again. You seek liberty. They want to enslave you.

The editorial in No. 6 (March 7):

"Field-marshal" Trotsky threatens free and revolutionary Kronstadt which has revolted against the absolutism of the Communist commisars. The workers who have overthrown the shameful yoke of the dictatorship of the Communist Party are threatened by this new kind of Trepoff[1] with military defeat. He promises to bomb the peaceful population of Kronstadt. He repeats the order of the original Trepoff, "Do not economize on bullets." He will have to find plenty for the revolutionary sailors, workers and Red soldiers.

For him, the dictator of Soviet Russia which has been violated by the Communists, the fate of the working masses means nothing. The important thing is that power should remain in the hands of his party.

He has the insolence to speak in the name of Soviet Russia. He promises pardon! He, the bloody Trotsky, leader of the Communist cossacks who are pitilessly shedding torrents of blood for the benefit of party absolutism, he, the stifler of all free spirit, dares to use this language to the people of Kronstadt, who boldly and firmly uphold the red flag!

The Communists hope to re-establish their absolutism at the price of the blood of the workers and the suffering of their imprisoned families. They want to compel the rebel sailors, workers and Red soldiers to stick out their necks again. They dream of installing their evil policy, which has hurled all of labouring Russia into the pit of disorder, famine and poverty.

Enough of this! The workers will not be fooled any longer! Communists, your hopes are vain and your threats have no effect. The last phase of the Workers' Revolution is on the march. It will sweep the imposters and slanderers from the country, from the Soviets soiled with their works. And as for your Pardon, Mr. Trotsky, we do not need it!

* * *

[1]Trepoff was one of the most vicious generals of Tsar Nicholas II, noted for his famous order to the troops during the disturbances of 1905 "Do not economize on bullets."

We do not Exact Vengeance

The oppression of the working masses by the Communist dictatorship has given rise to a perfectly natural indignation and resentment among the population. As a consequence of this, several Communists have been boycotted or dismissed. This should not happen again. We do not seek vengeance; we defend our interests as workers. We must act with composure, and only eliminate those who, by sabotage or by a campaign of slander, prevent the restoration of the power and rights of the workers.

* * *

We and They

Not knowing how to preserve the power that is escaping them, the Communists are employing the vilest provocations. Their unclean press has mobilized all its forces to stir up the masses and present the Kronstadt movement as a White-guard conspiracy. At this moment, their clique of infamous scoundrels has launched the slogan: "Kronstadt has sold out to Finland." Their newspapers vomit fire and poison. Having failed in the task of convincing the proletariat that Kronstadt is in the hands of the counter-revolutionaries, they now try to play on national sentiments.

The whole country knows already from our radio messages the reasons why the garrison and the workers of Kronstadt are fighting. But the Communists seek to distort the meaning of the events, hoping thus to deceive our brothers in Petrograd.

Petrograd is closely surrounded by the bayonets of the *kursanti* and the "guards" of the party. The Maliuta Skouratoff[1] –Trotsky–does not let the non-party workers and Red soldiers come to Kronstadt. He is afraid that they will learn the truth and that the truth will immediately sweep the Communists away. For, once the eyes of the working masses are opened, their calloused hands will take power.

This is the reason why the Petrograd Soviet has not replied to a radio message requesting that they send really impartial comrades to Kronstadt. Fearing for their skins, the Communist chiefs stifle the truth and pile lie on lie. "The White guards are at work at Kronstadt." "The Finns have already organized an army to take possession of Petrograd with the help of the Kronstadt rebels," etc.

We have only one thing to reply to all this. "All Power to the Soviets." Take off your hands, your hands red with the blood of the martyrs of liberty who struggled against the White Guards, the landlords and the bourgeoisie.

[1]Maliuta Skouratoff was the commander of the Guards of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, during the fifteenth century, whose name has been handed down from generation to generation as a symbol of human ferocity.

Finally, the same issue contains a virtual "profession of faith": the program and testament the Kronstadt workers bequeathed to the working masses of future revolutions. Their aspirations and their hopes are firmly and lucidly expressed in this document:

The Goals for Which We Fight

In making the October Revolution, the working class hoped to obtain its emancipation. But it resulted in a worse slavery for human individuality. The power of the police monarchy passed into the hands of the usurpers—the Communists—who, instead of giving freedom to the people, gave them the fear of the Cheka's jails, whose horrors far surpass the methods of the Tsarist police.

After long years of fighting and suffering, the Soviet Russian worker has only obtained impertinent orders, bayonet thrusts and the whistling bullets of the Cheka Cossacks. In fact, the Communist power has substituted for the glorious emblem of the workers, the hammer and sickle, another symbol—the bayonet and the barred window, which has permitted the new bureaucracy, the Communist functionaries and commissars, to procure for themselves a tranquil and carefree existence.

But most debased and criminal of all is the spiritual slavery established by the Communists. They put their hands on the thoughts and moral life of the workers, compelling everyone to think only according to their formulae. With the aid of state unions, they have chained the workers to the machines, and transformed work into a new slavery instead of making it pleasant. To the protests of the peasants, which have gone as far as spontaneous revolts, to the demands of the workers, compelled by the very conditions of their life to resort to strikes, they reply with mass shootings and a ferocity that the Tsarist generals might have envied.

The workers' Russia, the first to raise the red flag of the emancipation of labor, is drowned in the blood of the martyrs for the greater glory of the Communist rule. With it are drowned all the great and beautiful promises and possibilities of the proletarian revolution.

It has been becoming more and more clear, and now it is evident, that the Communist Party is not, as it pretends to be, the defender of the workers. The interests of the working masses are foreign to it. After obtaining power, the Communists have only one concern—not to lose it. For that end they consider any means are justified: defamation, deception, violence, assassination, vengeance on the families of rebels.

But the patience of the martyred workers is exhausted. The country is here and there illuminated by the fire of rebellion, of the struggle against oppression and violence. Workers' strikes are increasing. The Bolshevik bloodhounds are watchful; they are taking steps to prevent and stifle the inevitable third revolution. But in spite of everything it has come. It has been achieved by the labouring masses themselves. The

generals of Communism will soon see that it is the people who have arisen, convinced of their treason to the ideas of the revolution. Fearing for their skins, and knowing that there is nowhere to which they can escape from the rage of the workers, the Communists try to terrorize the rebels, with the help of the cossacks, with prison, executions and other atrocities. Under the yoke of the Communist dictatorship, life itself has become worse than death.

The working people in revolt have realized that in the struggle against the Communists and against the restoration of the regime of serfdom they cannot stop half-way. They have to go on to the end. The Communists pretend to make concessions. They have removed the barriers in the province of Petrograd. They have allotted ten million gold roubles to buy products abroad. But no one is fooled by that. The iron fist of the master, the dictator, is hidden behind this sop, the hand of the master who, once calm is restored will make them pay dearly for these concessions.

No, there is no stopping half-way. We must conquer or die. Red Kronstadt, terror of the counter-revolutionists of the Left as well as the Right, has set the example. It is here that the great new impulse of the revolution has been achieved. Here has been raised the flag of revolt against the tyranny of the last three years, against the oppression of Communist autocracy, which has outdone all the centuries of the monarchist yoke. It is here in Kronstadt there have been laid the foundations of the Third Revolution, which will break the last chains of the workers and lay open the new highway to socialist construction.

This new revolution will succour the working masses of the East and the West, for it will set an example of a new socialist construction opposed to the mechanical and governmental Communist method. The working masses beyond our frontier will then be convinced that all that is being done here at present in the name of the workers and peasants is not socialism.

The first step in this direction has been taken without firing a shot, without spilling a drop of blood. The workers have no need of blood. They will only spill it in cases of legitimate defence. In spite of all the revolting acts of the Communists, we are sufficiently in control of our natures to confine ourselves to isolating them from social life in order to prevent them from damaging the revolutionary work with their false and malevolent agitation.

The workers and peasants are going forward irresistibly. They leave behind them the Constituent Assembly and the bourgeois regime, they leave behind them the dictatorship of the Communist Party with its Cheka and state-capitalism which tightens the noose around the necks of the workers and threatens to strangle them.

The changes that have just taken place finally offer the working masses the possibility of ensuring freely elected soviets with no violent coercion by a party. This change also permits them to reorganize the state unions into free associations of workers, peasants and intellectuals. The police machine of the Communist autocracy is finally broken.

We cite two short articles from No. 7 (March 9). The first is a polemic:

Listen, Trotsky!

In their radio broadcasts, the Communists have dumped tons of filth on the instigators of the Third Revolution, who defend the real Soviet power against the usurpation and despotism of the commissars.

We have never concealed this fact from the population of Kronstadt. We have always made these slanderous attacks public in our *Izvestia.* For we have nothing to fear. The citizens know how the revolt happened and by whom it was made. The workers and Red soldiers know that there are neither generals nor White Guards in the garrison.

For its part, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee has sent a radio message to Petrograd demanding the release of hostages held by the Communists in their crowded prisons (workers, sailors and their families) and also the release of political prisoners.

A second broadcast proposed the sending to Kronstadt of non-party delegates who, having seen on the spot what was happening here, could tell the truth to the working masses of Petrograd. What have the Communists done? They have concealed this radio message from the workers and Red soldiers. Several units of "Field Marshal" Trotsky's troops have come over to our side and brought us newspapers from Petrograd. In these papers there is not a single word about our radio message.

However, they will not get away with it for long, these tricksters who play with marked cards and cry out that they have no secrets from the people, not even diplomatic secrets. Listen, Trotsky, as long as you succeed in escaping the judgment of the people, you can shoot innocent persons in batches. But you cannot shoot the truth. It will finally make its way, and then you and your cossacks will have to meet the bill.

The second article is constructive, and was published in order to initiate a discussion about the question of the unions:

The Reorganization of the Unions

Under the dictatorship of the Communists, the duties of the unions and their administrative commissions have been reduced to a minimum. During the four years of the revolutionary syndicalist movement in "socialist" Russia, our unions have had no chance of becoming class organs. This has not been their fault. It was, in fact, the consequence of the policy of the ruling party, seeking to educate the masses by the centralist "communist" method.

In the last analysis, the work of the unions was reduced to keeping records and absolutely useless correspondence, the purpose of which

was to establish the number of members in this or that union and to determine the speciality of each member, his situation in relationship to the party, etc. As for economic activity of a co-operative nature, as for cultural education of the worker members of the unions, nothing was done.

This is entirely understandable. For, if the unions were given the right to a considerable independent activity, the whole centralist system of construction undertaken by the Communists would inevitably have collapsed, which would have led to a demonstration of the uselessness of commissars and "political sections."

It was these failings that detached the workers from the unions, finally transforming the latter into nests of policemen which prevented all true union activity by the working class.

Once the dictatorship of the Communist Party is overthrown, the role of the unions should change radically. They and their re-elected administrative commissions should fulfil the great and urgent task of educating the masses for an economic and cultural renovation of the country. They should bring a new purifying spirit to this activity. They should become real representatives of the interests of the people.

The Soviet Socialist Republic cannot be strong unless its administration be exercised by the working classes, with the help of renovated unions. To work, comrade workers! Let us build new unions, free from all imposition. There lies our strength.

Izvestia No. 8 (March 10) was devoted mainly to military events: the attack on Kronstadt by the Communists and its defense.

No. 9 (March 11) contains a powerful "Appeal to the Workers and Peasants," of which we cite some essential passages:

Kronstadt has begun a heroic struggle against the hateful power of the Communists and for the emancipation of the workers and peasants . . . All that is happening now was prepared by the Communists themselves, by their bloody and ruinous work, which has lasted for three years. The letters we receive from the country are full of complaints and curses in regard to the Communists. Our comrades returning from leave, burning with rage and indignation, have told us of the horrors perpetrated by the Bolsheviks throughout the country. Moreover, we ourselves have seen, heard and felt all that goes on around us. An immense, heartrending cry of distress comes to us from the fields and cities of mighty Russia. It fills our hearts with indignation and arms our hands.

We do not want to return to the past. We are not servants of the bourgeoisie or mercenaries of the Allies. We are for the power of all the

workers, but not for the unlimited and tyrannical power of any single party. Neither Kolchak, nor Denikin, nor Yudenitch is operating at Kronstadt. Kronstadt is in the hands of the workers. The good sense and the conscience of the simple sailors, soldiers and workers of Kronstadt have finally found words and the course which will permit us to get out of the impasse in which we are at present . . .

In the beginning we wanted to settle everything peacefully. But the Communists did not wish to yield. More than Nicholas II, they clung to power, ready to drown the whole country in blood so that they could rule as autocrats. And that is why Trotsky, the evil genius of Russia, now launches our brothers against us. Hundreds of their bodies already cover the ice around the fortress. For four days the battle has raged, the cannons have roared, the blood of brothers has been spilt . . . For four days the heroes of Kronstadt have victoriously repelled all the attacks of the enemy. Like a hawk, Trotsky swoops over our city. But Kronstadt will hold out forever. We are all ready to die rather than capitulate . . .

Comrade workers, Kronstadt fights for you, for the starving, for those who are frozen by the cold, for those who are in rags and without shelter. As long as the Bolsheviks remain in power, there cannot be a better life.

You are supporting all this. In the name of what? Only so that the Communists may live in ease and the commissars get fat? You still have confidence in them? In telling the Petrograd Soviet that the government had appropriated millions of gold roubles to buy various products, Zinoviev calculated that each worker would get fifty roubles' worth. That, comrade workers, is the price per head for which the Bolshevik clique hopes to buy you . . .

Comrade peasants, it is you that the Bolshevik power has deceived and despoiled the most. Where is the land that you had taken from the landlords, after dreaming of it for centuries? It is in the hands of the Communists or exploited by the Sovkhoz. And as for you, all you can do is to look at it and lick your lips. They have taken from you everything they could carry off. You are brought to complete ruin by pillage. You are exhausted by Bolshevik serfdom. They have compelled you docilely to do the will of your new masters, to starve yourselves, to seal your mouths, to leave yourselves in the most squalid poverty.

Comrades, the people of Kronstadt have raised the flag of revolt, in the hopes that tens of millions of workers and peasants would respond to their appeal. The dawn that has just broken at Kronstadt must be converted into a bright sun over all Russia. The explosion that has just taken place in Kronstadt must revive all Russia, and first of all Petrograd. Our enemies have filled the prisons with workers, but many who are sincere and courageous are still at liberty. Comrades! Arise for the struggle against the absolutism of the Communists.

The same issue contains the following note:

Their Eyes are Opened

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee and the editors of *Izvestia* are submerged by an avalanche of declarations by Communists who are leaving their party? . . . What is the meaning of this frantic flight? Is it fear of vengeance from the working people who have taken power from the Bolsheviks? No, a thousand times no!

Someone, when a working woman came to make such a declaration to us, talked of "These runaways." "We are not running away," she indignantly retorted. "Our eyes have been opened."

The blood of the workers, which has reddened the ice of the Gulf of Finland for the benefit of the fools defending their power, this blood has opened the people's eyes. All those who still retain a grain of honesty are frantically leaving the gang of demagogues. No one remains in that gang but the dishonest and the criminal—the commissars of all grades, the Chekists, and the bigwigs fattened at the expense of the starving workers and peasants, their pockets filled with gold after having robbed the palaces, the museums and everything else that the people conquered with their blood.

All these rascals still have hopes. In vain! The people, who have overthrown the yoke of Tsarism and its police, will also get rid of the chains of Communist serfdom. The eyes of the working people are opened.

Izvestia No. 10 (March 12) does not contain anything more salient than the material already cited. We should nevertheless point out the following few lines from an article headed *"The Stages of the Revolution":*

A new—communist—slavery has taken root. The peasant has been transformed into a serf in the "soviet" economy. The worker is becoming a simple wage-worker in the State factories. The stratum of intellectual workers has been almost completely exterminated. Those who wanted to protest were thrown into the jails of the Cheka. And those who continued to act were simply lined up against the wall. Russia in its entirety has been transformed into an immense prison.

No. 11 (March 13) is devoted mainly to military events (and also contains various declarations and appeals similar to those already cited).

In No. 12 (March 14) we find the following curious article:

One Must Howl with the Wolves!

At a time of the struggle of the workers for their rights, which have been trampled under foot, one might expect that Lenin would not be a hypocrite and would speak the truth. In their minds, the workers and peasants separated Lenin from Trotsky and Zinoviev. They did not believe a single word of the latter. But as for Lenin, their confidence in him was not yet lost.

Yet on March 8th, when the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party began, Lenin repeated there all the lies about Kronstadt in revolt. He declared that the slogan of the movement was "for the Soviets but against the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks," but he did not hesitate to bring in the "White generals and the petit-bourgeois Anarchist elements."

Thus, by speaking such filth, Lenin involved himself. He let out the admission that the basis of the movement was the struggle for the power of the Soviets against the party dictatorship. But, troubled, he added: "This is another kind of counter-revolution. It is extremely dangerous, however insignificant at first sight may seem the corrections which they think our policy needs."

There is reason for him to be troubled. The blow struck by revolutionary Kronstadt is severe, and the leaders of the party feel that the end of their autocracy is near. The great distress of Lenin is manifest throughout his speech on Kronstadt. The word "danger" is constantly recurring. For example, he says: "We must have an end to this petit-bourgeois danger, which is very perilous for us, since instead of uniting the proletariat it disunites them. We need the maximum of unity." Yes, the chief of the Communists has to tremble and make an appeal for a "Maximum of unity." For the dictatorship of the Communists and also the party itself reveal a serious cleavage.

Was it indeed possible for Lenin to speak the truth? Recently, at a Communist discussion on the unions, he said: "All this bores me to death. I have had enough of it. Even apart from my illness I would be happy to throw it all up and flee, no matter where." But his partners will not let him flee. He is their prisoner. He must utter slanders, just as they do.

At the same time, the whole policy of the party is impeded by the action of Kronstadt, for Kronstadt demands, not "freedom of trade," but real Soviet power.

The same issue contains the following tirade against Zinoviev:

Vain Hopes

In the Petrograd *Pravda* for March 11th we read a letter from Zinoviev to the non-party comrades. This impudent camp-follower says with regret that Communist workers have become increasingly rare in the

factories of Petrograd. And he concludes that "the Communists must at all costs draw the honest non-party working men and women into the Soviet cause."

That the number of Communists in the factories should have fallen very low is only natural. Everybody is leaving the traitors' party. It is also natural that the Chekists should be trying to domesticate the non-party workers by all means—especially by trying to drag them into the swamp of collaboration with the Communists.

"We are therefore beginning, in an orderly, methodical way," writes this *provocateur* (Zinoviev), "to draw the non-party workers systematically into our work." But what honest worker would join this gang of thieves, commissars and Chekists? The workers know very well that these policemen are attempting to stifle the complaints of the labouring masses and put their vigilance to sleep with the help of certain advances and concessions, so that later they can better crush them in the vice. The workers see how their non-party comrades are treated at this moment by the Communists at Kronstadt.

"Lately," whines Zinoviev, "we have even had a great misunderstanding with the Baltic factory. But if this works realizes the plan that has been laid down and thus sets an example for others, many of its workers' errors will be pardoned."

In this the *provocateur* has betrayed himself, for only a few days ago the Communists assured the Kronstadt workers, over the radio, that all was well in Petrograd, and that the Baltic works was running normally. And now, in a few words, appears "a great misunderstanding" and an invitation to "set an example" for the other factories. Is something going on at the other factories as well? Was Zinoviev fooling us then, or is he fooling us now?

To gain the goodwill of the Baltic workers, the Communists promise them all the good things of this world. "We will put workers in the posts which at the moment are most important—food, supply, fuel, control of institutions, etc. We will give the non-party workers the means of taking a most active part, through the intermediary of their delegates, in the buying of products abroad with gold so as to enable the Petrograd workers to pass through this difficult period. We will start an energetic campaign against bureaucratism in our institutions. We may reprimand and criticize each other, but in basic issues we will always end by reaching an understanding." In this manner Zinoviev sings tenderly and sweetly today. He speaks to the workers in honeyed words to put them to sleep and to distract their attention from the cannon shots fired at their Kronstadt brothers.

Why have the Communists never spoken like this until now? Why have they never before done anything like this in the course of their nearly four years of ruling? It is all very simple. They could not achieve [what they are promising] before and they cannot achieve it now. We know the value of their promises and even of the scraps of paper which they call contracts.

No, the worker will not sell his liberty and the blood of his brothers for all the gold in the world. Therefore let Zinoviev abandon the empty project of "understanding." Now that their brothers of Kronstadt have risen to defend real freedom, the workers have only a single reply to give to the Communists. Provocateurs and Hangmen, relinquish your power immediately, while it is still possible for you to escape! Do not lull yourselves with your own lies.

The same issue contains an Appeal from the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, from which we cite the following passage:

When it seized power, the Communist Party promised you well-being.

But what do we see?

Three years ago we were told: "You can recall your representatives and re-elect your Soviets whenever you want."

But precisely when we in Kronstadt wanted to re-elect Soviets which would be free from the pressure of the Party, the new Trepoff–Trotsky–gave the order: "Do not economize on bullets!"

What treason!

We also asked that the workers of Petrograd be allowed to send us a delegation so that they could see who our generals are and who leads the movement.

This delegation failed to come. The Communists are afraid that a delegation will learn the truth and will communicate it to you.

The next to last issue of the rebels' *Izvestia,* No. 13 (March 15) contains the following editorial:

The Old Firm of Lenin, Trotsky and Co.

It has worked well–the old firm of Lenin, Trotsky and Co. The criminal absolutist policy of the Communist Party in power has led Russia to the pit of poverty and ruin.

After that, it should be time to retreat. But alas, the tears and blood shed by the workers seem still to be insufficient. At the very moment of the historical struggle which is boldly undertaken by revolutionary Kronstadt for the rights of the working people, who are scorned and trampled on by the Communists, the flock of crows has decided to hold its Tenth Party Congress. It is plotting the means for continuing its fratricidal work with even greater success.

Their [the Communists'] effrontery attains perfection. They speak very tranquilly of "commercial concessions," and Lenin, with all the simplicity in the world, declares: "We are beginning to undertake the principle of concessions. The success of this enterprise does not depend on us. But we must do our best." And with that he admits that the

Bolsheviks have put Russia into a pretty mess, for he continues: "We cannot reconstruct the country without making use of foreign techniques if we want to catch up economically with other countries. Circumstances have forced us to buy abroad not only machines, but also coal, which is plentiful at home. We will still have to make new sacrifices to keep consumer goods flowing and also to obtain the necessary supplies for the agrarian economy."

Where then are the famous economic achievements in the name of which they have turned the worker into a factory slave and the peasant into a serf of the sovkhoz?

But this is not all? . . . "If we succeed in reconstructing a great rural economy and a big industry," Lenin continues, "this will only be done by imposing new sacrifices on all the producers, with nothing in return." Such is the "well-being" for which the chief of the Bolsheviks would have everybody hope who is willing docilely to wear the yoke of Communist absolutism. He was brutally right, that peasant who declared at the Eighth Congress of the Soviets: "Everything is going splendidly . . . Only, if the land is ours, the bread is yours; if the water is ours, the fish are yours; if the forests are ours, the wood is yours . . ."

Lenin promises "to accord some favours to the small landowners, and to enlarge somewhat the areas of free economy." Like the good old master, he is proposing a few favours in order later on to crush the necks of the workers still harder in the vice of Party dictatorship. It can be seen easily in this admission: "Certainly we cannot dispense with compulsion, for the country is exhausted and sunk in a terrible poverty."

. . . It is thus that Lenin conceives the task of contruction: commercial concessions at the top level, and taxes below.

The same issue contains the following instructive summary:

The Benefits of the "Commune"

"Comrades, we are going to build a new and beautiful life," thus spoke and wrote the Communists. "We are going to destroy the world of violence and build a new socialist world filled with beauty." Thus they sang to the people. Let us see what the reality is.

All the best houses, all the best apartments are requisitioned for the offices of Communist institutions. Thus only the bureaucrats find themselves living in a comfortable, agreeable and spacious manner. The number of habitable lodgings has diminished, and the workers have remained where they were before. They live crowded together in worse conditions than ever.

For the houses, not being kept in repair, are dilapidated. The heating is out of order. Broken windowpanes are not replaced. Roofs are full of holes which let the water in. Fences are falling down. Half the

chimneys are broken. The toilets do not work and their contents flow all over the apartments, forcing citizens to relieve themselves in the yard or at a neighbour's house. The staircases are unlit and full of rubbish. The yards are piled with excrement, since the slit trenches, the privies, the drains and the sewers are neither cleaned nor emptied. The streets are filthy. The sidewalks are never repaired and they are uneven and slippery. It is dangerous to walk in the streets.

To obtain lodging one must have influence at a housing bureau. Without that nothing can be done; only the favourites have decent apartments.

As for food, it is even worse. Irresponsible and ignorant officials let tons of produce spoil. The potatoes which are distributed are always frozen. In spring and summer the meat is always rotten. At one time we would hardly feed pigs with what the citizens now get from the "builders of the beautiful new life." "The honest Soviet fish," the herring, has saved the situation for a long time now, but even that is getting scarce. The Soviet shops are worse than the old factory shops of unhappy memory, where the bosses kept all kinds of junk and the worker-slaves could say nothing about it.

In order to destroy family life, our rulers have invented collective restaurants. What is the result? The food is still inedible. The produce is stolen in various ways before it even reaches the citizens, who get only the leavings. The nourishment of the children is a little better, but still very inadequate. Milk especially is lacking. The Communists have requisitioned all the dairy cows from the peasants for their own *sovkhoz* [state farms]. Moreover, half of these animals die before reaching their destinations, and the milk of the surviving cows goes first to the rulers and then to the functionaries. Only what is left after that goes to the children.

But the hardest things to obtain are clothing and shoes. One wears, or exchanges, second-hand suits. Hardly anything is distributed. For example, one of the unions is now distributing buttons—a button and a half per person. Is this not laughable? As for shoes, they are unprocurable.

The road to the Communist paradise is beautiful. But can one traverse it barefooted?

There are plenty of cracks through which everything necessary flows. The clientele of the so-called "co-operatives" and the rulers possess everything. They have their own restaurants and special rations as well. They also have at their disposal the "Goods Bureau," which distributes products according to the wishes of the commissars.

We have finally realized that this "Commune" has sapped and completely demoralized productive work. All desire to work, all interest in work has disappeared. Shoemakers, tailors, plumbers, etc., have all quit and dispersed. They are serving as guards, messengers, etc. Such is the paradise which the Bolsheviks have tried to build.

In place of the old regime, a new regime of despotism, insolence,

favouritism, theft and speculation has been established, a terrible regime in which one must hold out his hand to the authorities for every piece of bread, for every button, a regime in which one does not belong to himself, where one cannot dispose of his own labour, a regime of slavery and degradation.

The 14th and last issue (March 16, 1921) is devoted primarily to the battle, which became increasingly desperate. We cite the following historical article, which completes the previous one:

So-Called Socialism

In making the October Revolution, the sailors and Red soldiers, the workers and peasants, spilled their blood for the power of the Soviets, for the building of a workers' republic.

The Communist Party paid close attention to the aspirations of the masses. Having inscribed on its banners attractive slogans which aroused the enthusiasm of the workers, it swept them into the struggle and promised them that it would lead them into the beautiful kingdom of socialism which only the Bolsheviks knew how to build.

Naturally, an infinite joy took possession of the workers and peasants. "At last, the slavery we endured under the yoke of landlords and capitalists is going to become a myth," they thought. It seemed as if the time of free labour in the fields, factories and workshops had come. It seemed as if power were going to pass into the hands of the workers.

By skilful propaganda, the children of the working class were drawn into the ranks of the party, where they were subjected to a rigorous discipline. Then, feeling themselves strong enough, the Communists progressively eliminated from power first the socialists of other tendencies, then they pushed workers and peasants out of many state posts, while continuing to govern in their name.

In this way the Communists have brought in the rule of the commissars, with all the despotism of personal power. Against all reason and contrary to the will of the workers, they then began stubbornly to build a state socialism with slaves, instead of building a society based on free labour.

When industry was completely demoralized, in spite of so-called "workers' control," the Bolsheviks established the nationalization of works and factories. From a slave of the capitalist the worker was transformed into a slave of state enterprises. Soon this no longer sufficed, and they planned the application of the Taylor system.

The whole mass of the peasants were declared enemies of the people and identified with the "kulaks." Very enterprisingly the Communists then set about ruining the peasants and substituting Soviet exploitation, that is to say, establishing the estates of the new agrarian profiteer, the State. That is what the peasants have obtained from the

Socialism of the Bolsheviks, instead of free labour on the liberated land for which they had hoped. In exchange for bread and livestock, almost entirely requisitioned, they obtained the raids of the Cheka and mass shootings. A fine system of exchange in a workers' state—lead and bayonets for bread!

The life of the citizen became monotonous and banal to the point of death, regulated according to the rules of the authorities. Instead of a life animated by free labour and the free development of the individual, an unprecedented and incredible slavery was born. All independent thought, all just criticism of the acts of the criminal rulers became crimes, punished by prison and often by death. Indeed, the death penalty, that disgrace to humanity, was extended in the "socialist fatherland."

Such is the beautiful kingdom of socialism to which the dictatorship of the Communist party has brought us. We have received State Socialism with Soviets of functionaries who vote docilely what the authorities and their infallible commissars dictate to them. The slogan, "He who does not work shall not eat," has been modified under this beautiful "Soviet" regime to "Everything for the Commissars." And as for the workers, peasants and intellectual workers, they have just to carry out their tasks in a prison.

This has become insupportable. Revolutionary Kronstadt has been the first to break the chains and bars of the prison. It fights for the true Soviet republic of the workers in which the producer himself will be owner of the products of his labour and can dispose of them as he wishes.

To finish this documentation, we should point out that most of the issues of the rebels' *Izvestia* contained headlines which clearly expressed their demands and their feelings. We cite a few examples:

ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS AND NOT TO THE PARTIES!

THE POWER OF THE SOVIETS WILL LIBERATE THE WORKERS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE FROM THE COMMUNIST YOKE.

LENIN SAYS: "COMMUNISM MEANS THE POWER OF THE SOVIETS PLUS ELECTRIFICATION," BUT THE PEOPLE HAVE LEARNED THAT BOLSHEVIK COMMUNISM MEANS THE ABSOLUTISM OF THE COMMISSARS PLUS THE FIRING SQUAD.

THE SOVIETS, AND NOT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, ARE THE BULWARK OF THE WORKERS.

LONG LIVE RED KRONSTADT WITH THE POWER OF THE FREE SOVIETS!

CHAPTER 5
Last Act: The End of Independence

IT REMAINS for us to discuss the last act of the tragedy—the attack on Kronstadt, the heroic defence of the city, and its eventual fall.

In *Izvestia* No. 5, for the 7th March, we find details of negotiations that had been set on foot concerning the sending of a delegation from Petrograd to Kronstadt to obtain information:

"The Provisional Revolutionary Committee," reports *Izvestia*, "has received from Petrograd the following radiogram: 'Inform Petrograd by radio if we can send to Kronstadt from Petrograd some delegates of the Soviet, chosen from the non-party members, and also some party members, to find out what is happening.'

"The Provisional Revolutionary Committee replied immediately by radio: 'Radiogram to the Petrograd Soviet: Having received the radio message of the Petrograd Soviet, asking "if we can send from Petrograd to Kronstadt some delegates chosen from the non-party members and also some party members, to find out what is happening," we inform you that we have no confidence in the independence of your non-party members, and propose that you elect, in the presence of a delegation of ours, non-party delegates from the factories, the Red army units and the sailors. You can add 15% of Communists. It is desirable to have a reply indicating the date for sending the representatives from Kronstadt to Petrograd and the delegates from Petrograd to Kronstadt by March 6th at 18.00 hours. In case it is impossible to reply by this time, we request that you indicate your date and the reasons for the delay. Means of return should be assured to the Kronstadt delegates.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee."

In spite of these negotiations, persistent rumours were spreading in Petrograd that the government was preparing for military operations against Kronstadt. But the population did not believe it. It seemed too criminal, too incredible.

The Petrograd workers knew nothing of what was happening

in Kronstadt. The only information was that given by the Communist press, and its bulletins always spoke of the "Tsarist general Kozlovsky who has organised the counter-revolutionary rebellion at Kronstadt". The population waited anxiously for the session called by the Petrograd Soviet which would decide what attitude to adopt. The Soviet met on March 4th. Only the members who were summoned could attend this meeting, and they were mainly Communists.

Here are the terms in which the Anarchist Alexander Berkman, who was allowed to attend this meeting, described it in his excellent study of the Kronstadt revolt, a study which was based on the same authentic sources as we have used in our own account.[1]

"As President of the Petrograd Soviet, Zinoviev declared the session open and delivered a long speech on the situation at Kronstadt. I admit that I went to this meeting disposed rather in favour of Zinoviev's point of view; the assembly was called together by reason of 'indications' of an attempted counter-revolution at Kronstadt. But Zinoviev's speech sufficed to convince me that the Communist accusations against the sailors were pure invention, without the slightest shadow of truth. I had heard Zinoviev speak on various occasions; once his premises were accepted, he had the gift of being convincing. But at this meeting his attitude, his arguments, his tone, his manner—all reflected the falseness of his assertions, his insincerity. The protest of his conscience was obvious to me.

"The only 'piece of evidence' against Kronstadt was the famous resolution of March 1st. Its demands were just and even moderate. The fatal step was decided on the basis of this document, and of the vehement, almost hysterical, denunciation of the sailors by Kalinin. The resolution against Kronstadt, prepared in advance and presented by Yevdokimoff—Zinoviev's right-hand man—was accepted. The delegates were over-excited by an excess of intolerance and a kind of bloodthirsty ferocity. The adoption of the bellicose resolution took place in a great tumult and in the midst of protests by several delegates from the Petrograd factories and by representatives of the sailors. The resolution declared

[1]Namely, the *Izvestia* of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, Soviet documents and selected eyewitnesses. So far as I know, his study first appeared in English in the form of a leaflet. Later it was reproduced in the Anarchist review *Timon* during the civil war in Spain, and finally the French Anarchist paper, *Le Libertaire* published it in several consecutive numbers in January, 1939.

Kronstadt guilty of counter-revolutionary sedition; it demanded its immediate surrender. This amounted to a declaration of war.

"Many of the Communists themselves refused to believe that the said resolution would be carried out. It seemed monstrous to attack by armed force 'the pride and glory of the Russian Revolution', to use the description that Trotsky had once bestowed on the Kronstadt sailors. Among their intimate friends, many of the sensible Communists talked of leaving the party if such a bloody act were performed."

On the following day, March 5th, Trotsky published his ultimatum to Kronstadt. It was transmitted to the population of Kronstadt by radio, and appeared in the same issue of *Izvestia*, on March 7th, as the two radiograms regarding the sending of delegations. Naturally, all negotiations on the latter subject were immediately broken off.

Here is the text of Trotsky's ultimatum:

"The Workers' and Peasants' Government has decreed that Kronstadt and the rebelling ships shall submit immediately to the authority of the Soviet Republic. I order, in consequence, that all who have raised their hands against the Socialist Fatherland lay down their arms without delay. Recalcitrants should be disarmed and brought to the Soviet authorities. The Commissars and the other representatives of the government who have been arrested must be set free on the spot. Only those who surrender unconditionally can expect mercy from the Soviet Republic.

"I simultaneously give the order to prepare for the suppression of the rebellion and the subjugation of the sailors by armed force. All responsibility for injuries that the peaceful population may suffer rests entirely on the heads of the White-guard mutineers. This warning is final. Signed: Trotsky, President of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. Kameneff, Commander-in-Chief."

This ultimatum was followed by an order from Trotsky containing the historic threat: "I will shoot you like partridges."

Several Anarchists who were still at liberty in Petrograd made a last effort to persuade the Bolsheviks to renounce the attack on Kronstadt. They considered it their duty to the Revolution to make this final effort to prevent the imminent massacre of the revolutionary élite of Russia, the sailors and workers of Kronstadt.

On March 5th, they sent a protest[1] to the Defence Committee, emphasising the peaceful intentions and just demands of Kronstadt, recalling to the Communists the heroic revolutionary role of the sailors, and proposing a method for resolving the conflict in a way worthy of comrades and revolutionaries. Here is the document in question:

"To the Petrograd Labour and Defence Committee, to President Zinovieff:

"To keep silent now is impossible and even criminal. The events which have just occurred oblige us as Anarchists to speak frankly and to set forth precisely our attitude towards the present situation.

"The spirit of discontent and unrest among the workers and sailors is the result of facts which require the most serious attention. Cold and hunger have given rise to discontent, the absence of the least possibility of discussion and criticism has forced the workers and sailors to declare their grievances formally.

"The White-guardist bands would like to and could exploit this discontent for their own interests. Hiding behind the sailors, they call for the Constituent Assembly, free trading and other similar advantages. We Anarchists have long exposed the fundamental error in these demands, and we declare before everyone that we will fight, arms in hand, against any counter-revolutionary attempt, together with all the friends of the Social Revolution, and at the side of the Bolsheviks.

"We are of the opinion that the conflict between the Soviet government and the workers and sailors should be liquidated, not by arms, but by meants of a revolutionary, fraternal agreement in a spirit of comradeship. For the Soviet government to have recourse to bloodshed in the present situation will neither

[1]Lest the reader be surprised to see Anarchists still at liberty in Petrograd in 1921, we must remark that the signers of the paper in question were not considered dangerous by the Bolsheviks. A. Berkman and E. Goldman did not engage in militant activity in Russia; Perkus and Petrovsky were the kind of Anarchists called "Soviet" (pro-Bolshevik). Later, Berkman and Goldman were nevertheless expelled; the fate of Perkus and Petrovsky is unknown to us. In any case, the last vestiges of the Anarchist movement disappeared during 1921.

As for the document itself, the reader will notice that it was necessarily conceived in fairly conciliatory, vague and even ambiguous terms. The authors nourished a naive and vain hope of reasoning with the Bolsheviks and inducing them to act "in a spirit of comradeship". But the Bolsheviks were not comrades, and they felt that the least concession in their conflict with Kronstadt would let loose a general movement against their dictatorship. For them it was a matter of life and death.

intimidate nor pacify the workers; on the contrary, it will only serve to increase the crisis and reinforce the work of the Allies and the counter-revolutionaries.

"What is more important, the use of force by the Workers' and Peasants' Government against workers and peasants will provoke a disastrous repercussion on the international revolutionary movement. It will result in incalculable injury to the Social Revolution. Comrade Bolsheviks, reflect before it is too late! You are about to take a decisive step.

"We submit to you the following proposal: to elect a commission of five members including Anarchists. This commission will go to Kronstadt to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. In the present situation, it is the most radical solution. It will have international revolutionary importance.

"Signed: Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Perkus, Petrovsky.
Petrograd, March 5, 1921."

In his account of the sending of the letter, Berkman records that: "Zinoviev was informed that the document was going to be submitted to the Defence Committee. He sent a personal representative to fetch it. I do not know if this appeal was discussed by the Committee. What is certain is that they did nothing about it."

On March 6th, Trotsky completed the preparations for the attack. The most loyal divisions were brought from all the fronts, the regiments of *kursanti,* the detachments of the Cheka, and the military units composed of Communists were concentrated in the forts of Sestroretsk, Lissy Noss and Krasnaia Gorka, as well as in nearby fortified positions. The best military technicians were sent to the theatre of operations to work out the plans for the blockade and attack on Kronstadt. Tuchachevsky was designated commander-in-chief of the troops.

On March 7th, at 6.45 p.m. the batteries of Sestroretsk, Lissy Noss and Krasnaia Gorka began to bombard Kronstadt. An avalanche of shells, bombs and also arrogant proclamations, dropped from aeroplanes, fell on the city. Repeatedly "the flock of crows" installed at Krasnaia Gorka—Trotsky, Tuchachevsky, Dybenko and others—gave orders to take the beseiged fortress by a crushing assault. These attempts were in vain. The most furious attacks were repulsed by the valiant defenders. The bombardment did not create the slightest panic in the city. On

the contrary, it increased the anger of the population and strengthened its will to resist to the end.

On March 8th, the sixth number of *Izvestia* reported the new situation for the first time. It carried the headline: *Trotsky's First Shot is a Communist Distress Signal,* and beneath this published its first communique, which ran as follows:

At 6:45 p.m. the Communist batteries at Sestroretsk and at Lissy Noss first opened fire on the Kronstadt forts. The forts replied to the challenge and soon reduced the batteries to silence. Then Krasnaia Gorka opened fire. It received a worthy response from the battleship *Sebastopol.* Intermittent gunfire continues. On our side two Red soldiers have been wounded and sent to the hospital. No material damage.

Kronstadt, March 7th, 1921

This communique was followed by the note which we reproduce below:

The first shot

They have begun to bombard Kronstadt. We are ready! Let us try the strength of our forces.

They are in haste to act. They understand that, in spite of all the lies of the Communists, the Russian workers are beginning to recognize the greatness of the work of liberation begun by revolutionary Kronstadt after three years of slavery.

The hangmen are uneasy. Soviet Russia, victim of their terrible madness, is escaping from their prison. And, at the same stroke, they are forced to renounce their domination over the working people.

The Communist government is sending up a distress signal. The eight days of the existence of free Kronstadt proves their impotence. A little longer, and the worthy response of our glorious ships and forts will sink the ship of the Soviet pirates, forced to accept battle with revolutionary Kronstadt which carries the banner of "Power to the Soviets and not to the Parties."

This was followed by an appeal:

Let the World Know!

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee has sent out the following radiogram today:

"To all—to all—to all—

"The first cannon shot has just been fired. 'Field Marshal' Trotsky, stained with the blood of the workers, was the first to fire on revolutionary Kronstadt, which has risen against the Communist autocracy to

re-establish the true power of the Soviets.

"Without spilling a single drop of blood, we—Red soldiers, sailors and workers of Kronstadt—freed ourselves from the Communist yoke. We spared the lives of those of their party who were among us. They now want to impose their power on us again, by the threat of cannons.

"Not desiring any bloodshed, we requested that non-party delegates from the Petrograd proletariat be sent here so that they can assure themselves that Kronstadt fights for Soviet power. But the Communists conceal our request from the Petrograd workers and open fire—the habitual response of the pretended workers' and peasants' government to the requests of the labouring masses.

"If the workers of the whole world only knew that we, defenders of the power of the Soviets, were guarding the conquests of the social revolution! We will conquer or die amid the ruins of Kronstadt, fighting for the just cause of the working masses.

"The workers of the whole world will be our judges. The blood of the innocent will fall upon the heads of the Communists, crazy fools who are drunk with power;

"Long live the power of the Soviets.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee."

We can add a moving detail: March 7th was Labor Day in Soviet Russia. Kronstadt, besieged and attacked, did not forget this. Under continual fire, the sailors broadcast their congratulations to the workers of the world. This message was reproduced in the same issue:

Kronstadt Is Liberated
To The Workers of the World

This day is a universal holiday: Labor Day. We of Kronstadt—in the noise of cannons and exploding shells shot by the Communists, the enemies of working people—send our fraternal greetings to the workers of the world: Greetings from Red Kronstadt, revolutionary and free . . .

We want you to achieve your emancipation soon, free from all forms of violence and oppression.

Long Live the Free Revolutionary Workers!

Long Live the World Social Revolution!

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

The same issue contained the following statement:

Kronstadt is Calm

Yesterday, March 7th, the enemies of the workers, the Communists, opened fire on Kronstadt. The population received the bombardment valiantly. It was soon apparent that the working people of the city were in perfect agreement with their Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

Despite the opening of hostilities, the Committee considered it unnecessary to declare a state of siege. In fact, what had they to fear? Surely not their own Red soldiers, nor their sailors, nor their workers or intellectuals.

On the other hand, in Petrograd, by reason of the state of siege that has been proclaimed, no one is permitted to go out alone until 7 a.m. That is understandable. The rulers have to fear their own working people.

The first attacks on Kronstadt were conducted simultaneously from north and south by the elite of the Communist troops, dressed in white garments which camouflaged them among the snow that covered the ice-bound Gulf of Finland. These first attempts to take the fortress by assault resulted in a terrible, insane loss of life. The sailors deeply deplored this, and in moving terms appealed to their duped brothers in arms who believed Kronstadt counter-revolutionary. Addressing itself to the Red soldiers who fought for the Communists, *Izvestia* said on March 10th (Issue No. 8):

We do not want to spill the blood of our brothers and we are holding our fire to the minimum they allow. We must defend the just cause of the workers and for this reason we feel ourselves forced to fire on our brothers, sent to certain death by the Communists who have created a life of privilege at the expense of the people.

Unfortunately for you, our brothers, a terrible blizzard was blowing when the attack was made, and everything was wrapped in the shadows of a dark night. In spite of this, the Communist hangmen ordered you on to the ice and threatened you from behind with the machine guns of the rearguard, manned by their Communist formations.

Many of you perished that night on the vast frozen expanse of the Gulf of Finland, and when the dawn came, after the storm had died down, only the miserable remnants of your detachments, exhausted, hungry, almost unable to walk, crept towards us in their white shrouds.

You were a thousand in the dawn, but in the course of the

day one could no longer count you. With your blood you have paid for this adventure. After your rout, Trotsky has gone to Petrograd to seek new victims for the slaughter: the blood of our peasants and workers is cheap to him."

Kronstadt lived in the firm belief that the Petrograd proletariat would come to its aid. But the workers of the capital were terrorised and Kronstadt was blockaded and isolated, so that no help was possible.

The Kronstadt garrison was composed of some 14,000 men, of whom about 10,000 were sailors. This garrison had to defend a vast front and many forts and batteries, scattered about the Gulf. The continual attacks of the endlessly reinforced Bolsheviks, the lack of food, the long, cold nights, all contributed to diminish the vitality of Kronstadt. Yet the sailors had heroic perseverance, hoping to the last moment that their noble example would be followed by the country. But the struggle was too unequal. The Bolshevik soldiers surrendered by thousands, others drowned by the hundred under the ice which had been weakened and filled with cracks and holes owing to the thaw, or had been broken by shellfire. But these losses did not diminish in the least the intensity of the attacks; fresh reinforcements were constantly arriving.

What could the city do, alone, against this rising tide? It exerted itself to hold on. It hoped stubbornly for an imminent general revolt of the workers and Red soldiers of Petrograd and Moscow, a revolt that would be the beginning of the third Revolution. And it fought heroically, night and day, on a front which steadily contracted. But neither revolt nor aid appeared. Each day Kronstadt's resistance grew weaker and the attackers gained advantage after advantage.

Furthermore, Kronstadt had not been planned to sustain an attack from the rear, although, among other lies, the Communists had spread the slanderous rumour that the revolutionary sailors wanted to bombard Petrograd. In fact, the famous fortress had been built for the single purpose of defending the capital from an attack by sea. The builders had not specifically reinforced the rear part of Kronstadt, and it was precisely on this point that the Bolsheviks pressed their attacks nearly every night.

During the whole day of March 10th, the Communist artillery

"Finally, on March 16th . . . the Bolsheviks made a thunderous, concentrated attack."

incessantly shelled the whole island from south to north. On the night of the 12th and 13th, the Communists attacked from the south, again using white "shrouds" (on March 11th "a thick fog prevented firing" said a communiqué in *Izvestia*). In this attack, hundreds of *kursanti* were once more sacrificed.

In the following days, the fight became increasingly uneven. The defenders were exhausted by fatigue and privations. They were now fighting on the immediate outskirts of the city. The communiqués on the fighting, published daily by the Revolutionary Committee, became more and more tragic. The number of victims increased rapidly.

Finally, on March 16th, feeling the climax approaching, the Bolsheviks made a thunderous, concentrated attack, preceded by furious artillery preparation. They had to make an end, cost what it may. Every hour of continued resistance, every shot fired by Kronstadt was a defiance of the Communists and could arouse millions of men against them at any moment. Already they felt increasingly isolated. Already Trotsky was forced to send into action detachments of Chinese and Bashkirs. It was necessary to wipe out Kronstadt without delay, or else Kronstadt would cause the Bolshevik power to fall apart.

From early morning, the heavy guns of Krasnaia Gorka rained ceaseless shells upon the city, causing fire and destruction. Aeroplanes dropped bombs, one of which destroyed the hospital despite its visible Red Cross signs. This furious bombardment was followed by a general assault from the south and east.

The plan of attack, as Dybenko, ex-Commissar of the Baltic Fleet and future dictator of Kronstadt, later recorded, was prepared in the minutest detail according to the directions of the commander-in-chief, Tuchachevsky, and the staff of the Army of the South. The attack on the forts began at daybreak. "The white shrouds and the valour of the *kursanti*," wrote Dybenko, "made it possible to advance in columns."

Nevertheless, the enemy was repelled at several points, after bitter machine-gun fighting. Amid the noise of the battle under the walls of the city, the sailors manoeuvred skillfully, rushing to the most threatened points, giving orders, shouting appeals. A genuine fanaticism of bravery took possession of the defenders.

No one thought of danger or death. "Comrades," came the cry, "arm the last workers' detachments quickly! Let everyone who is able to bear arms help." And the last detachments were formed, armed, and came in haste to take part in the battle.

The women of the people also gave proof of their courage and activity as, disdainful of danger, they advanced far outside the city to carry ammunition. They gathered in the wounded from all sides and bore them under intense fire to the hospital, where they organised first aid.

By the evening of March 16th, the battle still remained undecided, and the militiamen still rode through the streets on horseback and called upon the non-combatants to take refuge in safe places. But several forts had been taken, and during the night the Communists who were at liberty inside the city succeeded in indicating to the attackers that Kronstadt's weakest point was the Petrograd gate. By 7 a.m. on March 17th, the Bolsheviks forced it after a supreme assault, and advanced fighting into the centre of the city, the famous Anchor Square.

Still the sailors did not give in. They continued to fight "like lions", defending each district, each street, each house. It was only with heavy sacrifice that the Red soldiers were able to secure a firm foothold in several sections. The members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee still went from one threatened area to another, manoeuvring the combatants, organising the defence. The print-shop still continued to compose No. 15 of *Izvestia* which never appeared.

During the whole day of the 17th, they fought inside the city. The sailors knew that no quarter would be given them, and they preferred to die fighting rather than be basely assassinated in the cellars of the Cheka. It was a brutal slaughter, a butchery. Many Communists of the city, whose lives had been spared by the sailors, betrayed them, armed themselves, and attacked them from the rear. The Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, Kuzmin, and the President of the Kronstadt Soviet, Vassilieff, freed from prison by the Communists, took part in the liquidation of the revolt.

The desperate struggle of the sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt continued well into the night [of the 17th March]. The city which, during the fifteen days of the fight, had done no harm to the Communists within it, now became a vast theatre of shootings,

savage executions, regular assassinations in batches. Escaping from the butchery, certain detachments retreated towards Finland. In the early morning of March 18th, they (the Communists) were still fighting—or rather chasing the rebels—in certain sections of the city.

Two projects of the revolutionists remained uncompleted. In the first place, the sailors had decided to blow up at the last minute the two great battleships which were the first to raise the banner of the Third Revolution—the *Petropavlovsk* and the *Sebastopol.* But when they tried to carry out this project, they found that the electric wires had been cut. Secondly, nearly the whole population of Kronstadt had decided to leave the city in order to let the Communists have it "dead and empty". The total absence of means of transport prevented the execution of this plan.

Appointed Commissar of Kronstadt, Dybenko was given full power to "clean up the rebel city". This meant an orgy of massacre. The victims of the Cheka were innumerable, and they were executed *en masse* during the days that followed the fall of the fortress.

During the ensuing weeks the gaols of Kronstadt were filled with hundreds of prisoners from Kronstadt. Each night, little groups of prisoners were taken out and shot by order of the Cheka. Thus died Perepelkin, a member of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Kronstadt. Another member of the Committee, Verchinin, was treacherously arrested by the Bolsheviks at the beginning of the revolt. Here are the words in which *Izvestia* described the episode in Number 7, of March 9th, under the title *Abuse of the White Flag.*

"Yesterday, March 8th, some Red soldiers came out of Oranienbaum and towards Kronstadt carrying a white flag. Two of our comrades went out unarmed on horseback to meet the bearers of the flag of truce. One of our men approached the enemy group; the other stopped some distance away. Hardly had our comrades spoken a few words to them when the Communists threw themselves upon him, dragged him from his horse, and carried him off. The second comrade was able to return to Kronstadt."

The emissary of Kronstadt who was carried off in this way was Verchinin. Naturally, nothing more was ever heard of him. The

fate of the other members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee is unknown to us.

In the prisons, in the concentration camps, in the polar regions of Archangel, in the distant deserts of Turkestan, the men of Kronstadt who rebelled against the Bolshevik absolutism for really free Soviets endured, for long years, a miserable existence, and slowly died. There are probably no more of them still alive today.

Some time after the revolt, the Bolshevik government proclaimed a general amnesty for those rebels who, having escaped during the repression were abroad or in hiding in the country, if they spontaneously gave themselves up to the authorities. All those who were naive enough to believe in this "amnesty" were arrested on the spot and shared the fate of their comrades in arms. This ignoble ambush—among so many others—constitutes one of the most disgraceful pages in the true history of Bolshevism.

LENIN UNDERSTOOD nothing—or rather, did not want to understand anything—about the Kronstadt movement. The essential thing for him and his party was to *maintain themselves in power at all costs.* The victory over the rebels reassured him momentarily. But he was afraid for the future. He admitted that the guns of Kronstadt obliged the party "to reflect and review its position."

Did he revise it in the direction clearly indicated by the workers' disturbances and by the rebellion? Not at all. The fundamental lesson that emerged from these events was the need for the Party to revise the principle of dictatorship, and the necessity for the working people and the country as a whole of free elections to the Soviets.

The Bolsheviks were perfectly aware that the least concession in this direction would be a decisive blow at their power. And for them it was necessary, above all, to conserve that power whole. As Marxists, authoritarians and statists, the Bolsheviks could not permit any freedom or independent action of the masses. They had no confidence in the free masses. They were convinced that the fall of their dictatorship would mean the destruction of all the work that had been done, and the endangering of the Revolution, which they confused with themselves. At the same time, they were convinced that in preserving their dictatorship—the "levers of control"—they could "retreat strategically", and even renounce

temporarily their whole economic policy, without fundamentally compromising the goals of the revolution. At worst, they told themselves, the achievement of these goals would be retarded. Their thoughts therefore concentrated solely on this question: "What must be done to preserve our dominion intact?"

To yield temporarily in the economic field, to grant concessions in all fields, except that of "power"—that was their first solution. Their only "compromise" was to throw a bone to the population to appease their discontent; they had to give a little satisfaction, if only in appearance.

To determine the necessary concessions, to fix the limits of their "retreat", was their second preoccupation. They finally established the extent of these concessions, and then, by one of the most curious of historical ironies, Lenin and his party applied exactly the programme which they had falsely attributed to the men of Kronstadt and for which they claimed to have fought them and spilled so much blood.

Lenin proclaimed the famous "New Economic Policy" (the NEP). This granted the population a certain "economic freedom", *i.e.* a degree of freedom of private commerce and industrial activity. Thus the true meaning of the "freedom" demanded by the Kronstadt rebels was completely distorted. Instead of the free creative and constructive activity of the labouring masses, an activity which would have allowed the march towards their complete emancipation to continue and accelerate, which was what Kronstadt demanded, [the New Economic Policy] was "freedom" for certain individuals to trade and do business, to get rich. It was at this time that there appeared for a while the Soviet *nouveaux riches*, the "nepmen" (men of the NEP).

The Communists in Russia and abroad regarded and explained the NEP as a "strategic retreat", which permitted the dictatorship that was indispensable for the party a breathing space to fortify the positions that had been disturbed by the events of March, a kind of "economic respite" analogous to the "military respite" at the time of Brest-Litovsk.

In fact, the NEP was nothing but a halt, not in order to be able to advance better later on [in a revolutionary direction], but, on the contrary, to be better able to return to the point of departure, to

the same ferocious party dictatorship, the same unrestricted statism, the same domination and exploitation of the labouring masses by the new capitalist state. The Bolsheviks retreated so as to be better able to return to the road of totalitarian state capitalism, with a greater guarantee against an eventual repetition of Kronstadt.

During the period of retreat, this nascent capitalist state erected its "Maginot line" against this danger. It employed the several years of the NEP to increase its material and military forces, to create quietly its administrative, bureaucratic and police "apparatus," neo-bourgeois in character, to be able to feel strong enough to crush everyone in its "iron fist" and transform the whole country into a totalitarian barracks and prison.

If one wishes to speak of a strategic retreat in this sense, that is what took place. Soon after Lenin's death (in 1924) and the accession—after some struggles within the party—of Stalin, the New Economic Policy was suppressed, the "nepmen" were arrested, deported or shot, their goods were confiscated, and the State, completely armed and armoured, bureaucratised and capitalised, supported by its "apparatus" and by a strong socially privileged and well-fed class, resolutely established its complete omnipotence. But it is obvious that all these exigencies had nothing in common with the Social Revolution, or with the aspirations of the working masses, or with their real emancipation.

The Bolshevik government did not confine itself to an internal NEP. By a further historical irony, at the very moment when the Bolsheviks were falsely accusing the men of Kronstadt of being "lackeys of the Allies" and of "making deals with the capitalists", they themselves were carrying out precisely this task. Following Lenin's directives, they set out on the route of concessions to foreign capitalists and alliances with them. During the very days when they were shooting the Kronstadt sailors and when heaps of corpses still covered the ice of the Gulf of Finland, they agreed to several important contracts with industrialists of various countries, catering to the wishes of high finance, of the large-scale capitalism of the Allies, of Polish imperialism.

They signed the Anglo-Russian commercial treaty, which opened the doors of the country to English capital. They signed the peace of Riga, by virtue of which twelve million individuals

were thrown into the hands of reactionary Poland. By means of alliances, they helped the Young Turkish imperialism to strangle the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus. And they prepared to enter into business relations with the bourgeoisie of all countries, seeking support from this quarter.

We have said elsewhere: "In strangling the Revolution, the (Communist) power was forced to secure for itself, more and more openly and firmly, the aid and support of reactionary and bourgeois elements . . . Feeling the ground slipping from under their feet and detaching them more and more from the masses, breaking their last contacts with the Revolution and giving free play to a whole privileged class of big and small dictators, sycophants, flatterers, opportunists and parasites, but impotent to create anything that was really revolutionary and positive since they had rejected and destroyed the *new* forces, the authorities found themselves obliged, in order to consolidate themselves, to turn to the *old* forces. It is their company which they seek more and more frequently and freely. It is from them that they solicit agreements, alliances and unions. It is to them that they yield positions, not having any other way of assuring their own existence. Having lost the friendship of the masses, they seek friendship elsewhere. They think they can sustain themselves with the help of these new friends, whom they hope to betray one day for their own advantage. Meanwhile, they become enmeshed, every day more deeply, in an anti-revolutionary and anti-social action."

Kronstadt fell and State Socialism triumphed. It is still triumphant today. But the implacable logic of events leads it infallibly to disaster. For its triumph bore within itself the seed of its final destruction. It exposed more and more the real character of the Communist dictatorship. More and more, the Communists, caught by the logic of events, showed that they were prepared to sacrifice the goal, to renounce all their principles, to deal with anyone, so as to preserve their domination and their privileges.

Kronstadt was the first entirely independent attempt of the people to liberate itself from all yokes and achieve the Social Revolution, an attempt made directly, resolutely, and boldly by the working masses themselves without political shepherds, without

leaders or tutors. It was the first step towards the third and social revolution.

Kronstadt fell. But it had accomplished a task and that was the important thing. In the complex and shadowy labyrinth which opens out to the masses in revolt, Kronstadt is a bright beacon that lights up the right road. It matters little that in the circumstances in which they found themselves the rebels still spoke of power (the power of the Soviets) instead of getting rid of the word and the idea altogether and speaking instead of co-ordination, organisation, administration. It was a last tribute paid to the past. Once full freedom of discussion, organisation and action have been completely won by the working masses themselves, once the true road of independent popular activity is found, the rest will come automatically and inevitably.

It matters little that the fog is still thick and hides the beacon and the way it lights. Once lit, that light will never go out. And the day is coming—perhaps it is not far off—when millions of human beings will see it shine.

PART II

UKRAINE (1918–1921)

CHAPTER 1

Mass Movement in the Ukraine

This chapter puts me in a quandary.

If I devoted a hundred or so pages to the Kronstadt movement, a proper treatment of the events in the Ukraine would require at least five times as much space, in view of their scope, their duration, and above all their revolutionary and moral importance. But this is impossible.

Besides, my documentation on this movement is limited to the outstanding work of Peter Arshinov: *History of the Makhnovist Movement.*[1] And in my present circumstances I cannot complete Arshinov's work. On the other hand, filling pages with documents that have already been published—even if we take into account their specific character and the bibliographical rarity of the work—seems exaggerated.

I can obviously enrich the study with two important elements: (1) certain facts set forth in volumes II and III of the Memoirs of Nestor Makhno, initiator and military leader of the movement, which have been published only in Russian (in 1936 and 1937); (2) certain personal experiences of my own, since I took part in this movement on two occasions, at the end of 1919 and at the end of 1920, for about six months.

As for the Memoirs of Makhno: the death of their author ended the work at its very beginnings (Makhno died in Paris in 1935). The three volumes which have been published (the

[1] Peter Arshinov, Russian anarchist, member of the Moscow Federation, took part in the movement in the Ukraine during most of its duration. [Arshinov's *Istoriya Makhnovskogo Dvizhentya* was first published in Berlin in 1923. The English translation of the *History of the Makhnovist Movement* is published by Black & Red and Solidarity, Detroit and Chicago, 1974. Voline's page citations refer to the French edition P. Archinoff, *L'Histoire du Mouvement Makhnoviste*, Paris: LibrairieInternationale, 1924.]

first in Russian and in French, long before the following two) only treat the period 1917-1918; they stop *precisely on the threshold of the real movement, of the most characteristic and important events (1919-1921).*

The account of my own personal experiences would be extremely useful if it could be inserted into a general and complete history. Detached from this whole, they do not have the same importance.

Nevertheless, it is impossible not to speak of the mass movement in the Ukraine, especially if one studies the Russian revolution from the perspective which I have in mind.

This movement played an *exceptionally important* role in the Revolution: even more important than that of Kronstadt. This importance is due to its extent, its duration, its *essentially popular character,* its clear-cut ideological standpoint, and finally the tasks it set out to accomplish.

For reasons that the reader of this book will easily understand, all the available literature, of whatever type, makes absolutely no mention of this movement. Or if it does, it does so in a few lines and solely with a view to slandering it.

In the last analysis, the Ukrainian epic has until today remained almost completely unknown. And yet, among the elements of the "Unknown Revolution," it is certainly the most remarkable.

In fact, even the work of Arshinov, nearly 400 pages long, is only a *summary.* If the Ukrainian movement were treated as it deserves, it would fill several volumes. The movement's *documents,* which are of enormous historical value, would alone fill hundreds of pages. Peter Arshinov was only able to reproduce a very small number of them.

A work of this magnitude will have to be undertaken by future historians who have all the required sources at their disposal. Our present task is to shed as much light as possible on this movement.

All these contradictory considerations finally led me to make the following decision:

1. To urge every serious and genuinely interested reader to read the basic work of Peter Arshinov. This book cannot easily be found, having been published in 1924 by a small libertarian bookshop. But the reader will not regret the time

he spends looking for it in bookshops, along the quais of Paris, or in large libraries.

2. To communicate to the reader the *most important* aspects of the movement, by drawing heavily from Peter Arshinov's documentation.

3. To complete the exposition with certain details drawn from N. Makhno's memoirs.

4. To complete it with personal experiences, with my personal impressions and evaluations.

The name Ukraine (or Little Russia) designates a vast region of south-western Russia whose area is about 450,000 square kilometers (nearly four-fifths the size of France) and which contains about thirty million inhabitants. It includes the departments, or "governments," of Kiev, Tchernigov, Poltava, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson and Tauride. The latter lies at the entrance to the Crimea, from which it is separated by a part of the Black Sea, by the Perekop Isthmus and by the straits of the Sea of Azov.

Without getting involved in a detailed account of the Ukraine, I will briefly mention several characteristic features of the country which the reader should know in order to be able to understand the events which were unfolded there between 1917 and 1921.

It is one of the wealthiest agricultural regions in the world. The rich and fertile black soil yields incomparable crops. Once the Ukraine was called "the granary of Europe," for it was a very important source of wheat and other agricultural products for several European countries. Besides grain, Ukraine is rich in vegetables and fruits, in fertile steppes, and pastures, in forests and waterways, and finally, in its eastern part, in the coal of the Don Basin.

By reason of its exceptional richness, and also because of its geographical location, the Ukraine has at all times been a particularly tempting prize for neighboring and even distant countries. For centuries the Ukrainian population, ethnographically mixed but very much united in its firm desire to safeguard its liberty and independence, experienced wars and struggles against the Turks, the Poles and the Germans, and particularly against

its powerful immediate neighbour, the Great Russia of the Tsars. Finally, it was incorporated partly by conquest and partly voluntarily (since it felt an imperative need to be effectively protected by a single and powerful neighbour against the various competitors for its wealth), into the immense Russian Empire.

However, the ethnic composition of the Ukrainian population, their peculiarities of character, temperament and mentality, their traditional contacts—through warfare, commerce, etc.—with the western world, together with certain geographical and topographical features of their region, resulted in the maintenance under the Tsars of a fairly marked difference between the situation of Great Russia and that of the Ukraine.

Certain parts of the Ukraine never allowed themselves to be wholly subjugated, as had happened in Great Russia. Their population always preserved a spirit of independence, of resistance, of popular rebellion. Relatively cultivated and refined, individualistic and capable of taking the initiative without flinching, jealous of his independence, warlike by tradition, ready to defend himself and accustomed, for centuries, to feel free and his own master, the Ukrainian was in general never subjugated to that total slavery—not only of the body but also of the spirit—which characterised the population of the rest of Russia.

This applied particularly to the inhabitants of certain sections of the Ukraine, who had even obtained a sort of tacit *habeas corpus*, and lived in freedom, since their country was relatively inaccessible to the armed forces of the Tsars, rather like the *maquis* of Corsica.

On the islands of the lower Dnieper—in the famous Zaporojie district—men in love with liberty had organised themselves, from the 14th century, in exclusively masculine camps, and struggled for centuries against the attempts at enslavement by various neighbouring countries, including Great Russia.[1] Finally, this warrior population had to submit to the Russian State. But the tradition of the *volnitza* (free life) was perpetuated in the Ukraine and could never be stifled. No matter how great were the efforts of the Tsars since Catherine II to wipe from the spirit of the Ukrainian people

[1]One of the great Russian writers, N. Gogol (1809-52), has painted an admirable picture of the life and customs of the Zaporojie in his magnificent novel *Taras Bulba*.

all trace of the traditions of the Zaporoj Republic, this heritage of past centuries (14th-16th) remained.

Serfdom, pitiless in Great Russia, had a somewhat more "liberal" appearance in the Ukraine, by reason of the constant resistance of the peasants. Thousands of them escaped from lords who were too brutal, fled to the bush and took refuge in the *volnitza*.

In Great Russia itself, all those who did not want to be serfs any longer, those who wanted more liberty, those who loved the independent life, those who had difficulties with the police or fell under the knout of the Imperial laws fled to the steppes, the forests and other inaccessible regions of the Ukraine, and there began a new life. Thus for centuries, the Ukraine was the promised land of fugitives of every kind. The proximity of the sea and the ports of Taganrog, Berdiansk, Kherson, Nikolaiev and Odessa, the nearness of the Caucasus and Crimea, regions distant from the centres and full of hiding places—increased the possibilities for strong and enterprising individuals to lead a free, unsubjugated life, breaking with existing society. Some of these men later provided a nucleus for those vagabonds (*bossiaki*) who were so masterfully depicted by Maxim Gorki.

Thus the whole atmosphere of the Ukraine was very different from that of Great Russia, and down to our own time, the peasants of the Ukraine have preserved a particular love for freedom, which has manifested itself in the stubborn resistance to all powers that have sought to subjugate them.

In view of these facts the reader will understand why the dictatorship and statism of the Bolsheviks encountered a much more determined and prolonged resistance in the Ukraine than in Great Russia. Other factors favoured this attitude:

1. The organised forces of the Communist Party were weak in the Ukraine, in comparison with those in Great Russia. The influence of the Bolsheviks over the peasants and workers there was always insignificant.

2. For this and other reasons, the October Revolution took effect there much later; it began at the end of November 1917 and was still going on in January 1918. It was first the local nationalist

bourgeoisie—the *Petluristi,* or partisans of the "democrat" Petlura —who retained power in the Ukraine, parallelling the power of Kerensky in Great Russia. The Bolsheviks fought this power more on military than on revolutionary grounds.

3. The unpopularity and the impotence of the Communist Party meant that the taking of power by the Soviets was carried on quite differently than in Great Russia.

In the Ukraine, the Soviets were in a much more real sense meetings *of workers' and peasants' delegates.* Not being dominated by a political party—for the Mensheviks, likewise, did not play a significant role in the Ukraine—these Soviets had no means for subordinating the masses. Hence, the workers in the factories, and the peasants in the villages felt themselves to be a genuine force. In their revolutionary struggles, they were not accustomed to yield the initiative to anyone, or to have by their side a constant and inflexible tutor like the Communist Party in Great Russia. Because of this, a much greater freedom of spirit, of thought and action took root. It inevitably manifested itself in the mass revolutionary movements.

All these factors made themselves felt from the beginning. While in Great Russia the revolution was brought into the orbit of the Communist state quickly and without difficulty, this process of statification and dictatorship met with considerable obstacles in the Ukraine. The Bolshevik "Soviet apparatus" was installed primarily by military force.

An autonomous movement of the masses, especially the peasant masses, entirely neglected by the political parties, developed parallel to the process of statification. This independent movement had already appeared under the "democratic republic" of Petlura. It developed slowly, feeling its way, but it seems to have existed from the first days of February 1917. It was a spontaneous movement which was groping for the overthrow of the serf economy and the creation of a revolutionary system based on the common ownership of the means of production and the principle of exploiting the land by the masses themselves.

In the name of these principles, the workers in many places drove out the proprietors of factories and put the management of production under the control of their class organisations: the new

unions, factory committees, etc. The peasants took possession of the land of the gentry and the *kulaks* (rich peasants), and, by reserving the use of it strictly for the workers themselves, outlined a new system of agrarian economy. Naturally, this process spread very slowly, in a disorganised and spontaneous manner. These were the first clumsy steps towards a larger, more conscious, and better organised future activity. But the masses intuitively felt that the road along which they were travelling was the right one.

"This practice of direct revolutionary action by the workers and peasants," says Peter Archinov, "developed in the Ukraine almost unobstructed during the whole first year of the Revolution, thus creating a precise and wholesome *line of revolutionary conduct for the masses.* Each time some political group or other, having taken power, tried to break this line of revolutionary conduct on the part of the workers, the latter began a revolutionary opposition and struggled in one way or another against these attempts.

"Thus, the revolutionary movement of the workers towards social independence which had begun in the first days of the revolution, did not weaken, no matter what power was established in the Ukraine. It was not even extinguished by the Bolsheviks, who, after the October uprising, tried to introduce their authoritarian statist system into the country.

"What was especially characteristic about this movement was its desire to attain the real goals of the working class in the revolution, its will to conquer labour's complete independence, and finally its defiance of the non-labouring social groups.

"Despite all the sophisms of the Communist Party, seeking to prove that it was the brain of the working class and that its power was that of the workers, every worker or peasant who had retained his class spirit or instinct was more and more aware that in fact the party was turning the workers of the cities and the countryside away from their own revolutionary tasks; that power had them under its control, that the very fact of a statist organisation was a usurpation of their right to independence and to the free disposition of their labour.

The aspiration to independence, to complete autonomy, became the basis of the movement born in the depths of the masses. In all kinds of ways their thoughts were constantly rooted in this idea. The statist action of the Communist Party pitilessly stifled these aspirations. But it was precisely this action of a presumptuous party, intolerant of any objection, that clarified the minds of the workers and drove them to resist.

"In the beginning, this movement confined itself to ignoring

the new power and performing spontaneous acts whereby the peasants took possession of the lands and goods of the landlords. They found their own ways and means."
(Peter Archinov: *The History of the Makhnovist Movement*, pp 70-72)

The brutal occupation of the Ukraine by the Austro-German troops after the peace of Brest-Litovsk, with all its terrible consequences for the working people, created new conditions in the country and hastened the development of this movement of the masses. Here, I will take the liberty of quoting almost an entire chapter from Peter Archinov's work. A better exposition of the events which followed the peace of Brest-Litovsk cannot be given. Let us recall that the principal clause of the peace treaty gave the Germans free access to the Ukraine, from which the Bolsheviks retired.

Archinov's acount is rapid, substantial and penetrating. I need not improve or add anything. It is absolutely correct factually, and each detail is important if the reader wishes to understand subsequent events.

"The Brest-Litovsk treaty concluded by the Bolsheviks with the Imperial German government opened wide the doors of the Ukraine to the Austro-Germans. They entered it as masters. They did not confine themselves to military action, but became involved in the economic and political life of the country. Their purpose was to appropriate its products.

"To accomplish this easily and completely, they re-established the power of the nobles and the landed gentry who had been overthrown by the people, and installed the autocratic government of the Hetman Skoropadsky.

"Their troops were systematically misled by their officers, who represented the situation in Russia and the Ukraine as an orgy of blind, savage forces, destroying order in the country and terrorising the honest working people. By this process, they provoked in the soldiers a hostility towards the rebel peasants and workers, thus helping the action (an action of absolute heartless, common robbery) of the Austro-German armies.

"The economic pillage of the Ukraine by the Austro-Germans with the connivance and help of the Skoropadsky government was colossal and horrifying. They carried off everything—wheat, livestock, poultry, eggs, raw materials, etc.—all in such quantities that the means of transportation was not sufficient. As it was

brought to the immense depots which were given over to the loot, the Austrians and the Germans hastened to take away as much as possible, loading one train after another. Hundreds, even thousands, of trains carried everything off. When the peasants resisted this pillage, and tried to retain the fruits of their labour, floggings, reprisals, and shootings resulted.

"In addition to the violence of the invaders and their cynical military brigandage, the occupation of the Ukraine by the Austro-Germans was accompanied by a fierce reaction on the part of the gentry. The Hetman's régime meant the annihilation of all the revolutionary conquests of the workers, a complete return to the past.

"It was therefore natural that this new condition strongly accelerated the march of the movements previously begun, under Petlura and the Bolsheviks. Everywhere, primarily in the villages, insurrectionary acts started to occur against the gentry and the Austro-Germans. It was thus that began the vast movement of the Ukrainian peasants, which was later given the name of the Revolutionary Insurrection.

"The origin of this insurrection is often seen as merely the result of the Austro-German occupation, and the régime of the Hetman. This explanation is insufficient and inaccurate. The insurrection had its roots in the total situation and in the fundamental nature of the Russian Revolution. It was an attempt by the workers to lead the Revolution to its natural conclusion: the true and complete emancipation and supremacy of labour. The Austro-German invasion and the agrarian reaction only accelerated the process.

"The movement rapidly took on vast proportions. Everywhere the peasants took a stand against the gentry, assassinated them or drove them away, took over their land and their goods, and paid no attention to the invaders.

"The Hetman and the German authorities responded by implacable reprisals. The peasants in the rebellious villages were flogged and shot *en masse*, while all their goods were burned. Hundreds of villages suffered, in a short space of time, a terrible punishment from the military and landed castes. This occurred in June, July and August, 1918.

"Then the peasants persevering in their revolt, organised as guerillas and started hedge warfare. As if by order of invisible organisations, they formed in a number of places, almost simultaneously, a multitude of partisan detachments, acting militarily and always by surprise against the nobles, their guards and the representatives of power. As a rule, these detachments consisting of twenty, fifty or a hundred well armed horsemen, would

appear suddenly where they were least expected, attack a nobleman or the [Hetman's] National Guard, massacre all the enemies of the peasants and disappear as quickly as they had come. Every lord who persecuted the peasants, and all of his faithful servants, were noted by the partisans and were in continual danger of being liquidated. Every guard, every German officer was condemned to almost certain death. These exploits, occurring daily in all parts of the country, cut out the heart of the agrarian counter-revolution, undermined it, and prepared the way for the triumph of the peasants.

"It must be noted that, like the vast and spontaneous peasant insurrections, which arose without any preparation, these organised guerilla actions were always performed by the peasants themselves with no help or direction from any political organisation. Their methods of acting made it necessary for them to look after the needs of the movement themselves, and to direct it and lead it to victory. During their whole fight against the Hetman and the noblemen, even at its most difficult moments, the peasants remained alone facing their vicious, well-armed and organised enemies. This fact had a great influence on the very character of the whole revolutionary insurrection. Everywhere that it remained to the end a 'class action', without falling under the influence of political parties or nationalist elements, it retained intact not only the imprint of its origin in the very depths of the peasant mass, but also a second fundamental trait—the perfect consciousness which all these peasants possessed, of being their own guides and the animators of their own movement. The partisans especially were permeated with this idea. They were proud of this special quality of their movement and felt themselves capable of fulfilling their mission.

"The savage reprisals of the counter-revolution did not stop the movement; on the contrary, they provided it with a motive for enlarging and extending. The peasants became increasingly united among themselves, driven by the very force of events to a general plan of revolutionary action.

"To be sure, the peasants of the whole Ukraine were never organised into a single force acting under a single leadership. From the point of view of revolutionary spirit they were all united, but in practice, they were mainly organised locally, by regions, the small detachments of partisans, isolated from one another, uniting to form larger and more powerful units. In so far as the insurrections became more frequent and the reprisals more ferocious and organised, these unions became an urgent necessity.

"In the south of the Ukraine, it was the region of Gulai-Polya which took the initiative in unification. There, it took place not only for reasons of defence, but also and primarily for the purpose of the complete destruction of the agrarian counter-revolution."

This latter goal, more important and decisive in character, imposed on the movement towards unification of the peasant masses a larger task; that of incorporating in the movement revolutionary elements from other regions, and developing, with the participation of all the revolutionary peasants, if possible, a great organised force capable of fighting reaction as a whole and victoriously defending the freedom and territory of the people in revolt.

The most important role in this work of unification and in the general development of the revolutionary insurrection in the southern Ukraine was performed by the detachment of partisans guided by a peasant native to the region: Nestor Makhno. That is why the movement is known as the "Makhnovist movement."

"From the first days of the movement," says Peter Archinov, "up to its culminating point when the peasants vanquished the gentry, Makhno played a preponderant and central role, to such an extent that the whole insurgent region and the most heroic moments of the struggle are linked to his name. When, later on, the insurrection had triumphed completely over the Skoropadsky counter-revolution, but the region was threatened anew by Denikin, Makhno became the rallying point for millions of peasants, in the struggle against the latter."

It should be emphasised that only the southern part of the Ukraine was involved in this vast operation. "For," as Archinov continues, "it was not everywhere that the insurrection retained its consciousness, its revolutionary essence and its loyalty to the interests of the working class. While in the southern Ukraine the insurgents, increasingly conscious of their role and their historic mission, raised the black flag of anarchism and set forth on the anti-authoritarian road of the free organisation of the workers, in the west and north-western regions of the country, they gradually slipped, after the overthrow of the Hetman, under the influence of foreign elements; enemies of their class, notably the national-democrats (the *petlurivtzi*, partisans of Petlura). For more than two years a party of the insurgents in the western Ukraine supported the latter, which, under the nationalist banner, pursued the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie. Thus, the insurgent peasants of the governments of Kiev, Volhyny, Podoly and a part of Poltava,

Nestor Makhno.

while having common origins with the rest of the insurgents, were unable, subsequently, to discover among themselves either the conciousness of their historic mission or the ability to organise, and they fell under the rod of the enemies of the world of labour, becoming blind instruments in their hands.

"The insurrection in the south had an entirely different significance and took on a different aspect. It separated itself strictly from the non-labouring elements of society, it quickly and resolutely got rid of the national, religious, political and other prejudices of the régime of oppression and slavery; it based itself on the real aspirations of the proletarian class of the city and the country and carried on a bitter warfare, in the name of these aspirations, against the many enemies of Labour."

WE HAVE already mentioned more than once the name of Nestor Makhno, a Ukrainian peasant who played a vast and exceptional part in the great peasant insurrection of the southern Ukraine, which all the existing literature on the Russian Revolution, except a few libertarian works, passes over in silence—or merely mentions in a few defamatory lines. As for Makhno himself, the animator and military guide of that insurrection, if they deign to mention him at all, it is only to bestow on him such titles as "bandit", "assassin", "robber", "pogromist", etc. Always they obstinately drag him in the mud, slander him, abhor him. At best, these unscrupulous authors, without bothering to examine the facts or to separate them from fables, spread absurd and unutterably stupid legends about the life and acts of this libertarian militant.[1]

[This situation] compels us to record briefly the authentic biography of Makhno up to the time of Skoropadsky's overthrow. It is indispensable to know the personality of Makhno to understand the course of events.

"Makhno" says Peter Archinov, "was born on October 27, 1889, and was brought up by his mother in the village of Gulai-

[1]See for example, certain "works" of Joseph Kessel.

Polya, in the district of Alexandrovsk, department of Ekaterinoslav. He was the son of a poor peasant family. He was only ten months old when his father died, leaving him and his four little brothers in the care of their mother.

"Because of the extreme poverty of the family, he worked from the age of seven as a herd-boy, tending the cows and sheep of the peasants of his village. At eight, he entered the local school, which he attended in winter, always serving as herd-boy in summer.

"At twelve, he left school and his family to take a job. He worked as a farm boy on the estates of nobles and [the farms of] rich German peasants (*Kulaks*) whose colonies were numerous in the Ukraine. Already at this period, by the age of fourteen or fifteen, he felt a strong hatred towards the exploiters and dreamed of the way he could some day 'get even with them', both for himself and for others. Until the age of sixteen, however, he had no contact with the political world. His social and revolutionary concepts formed and took place spontaneously, in a very narrow circle of peasants, proletarians like himself.[1]

"The revolution of 1905 made him break immediately out of his small circle, and threw him into the great torrent of revolutionary events and actions. He was then seventeen. He was full of revolutionary enthusiasm and ready to do anything in the struggle for the liberation of the workers. After having made several contacts with political organisations, he decided to enter the ranks of the Anarcho-Communists and from that moment became an indefatigable militant. He carried on a great deal of activity and took part in [some of] the most dangerous acts of the struggle for liberty.

"In 1908, he fell into the hands of the Tsarist authorities, who condemned him to be hanged for Anarchist associations and for participating in terrorist acts. Because of his youth, the death penalty was commuted to life imprisonment at hard labour. He served his sentence in the Butyrki central prison of Moscow. Although prison life was without hope and very difficult for him to bear, Makhno used it in order to educate himself.[2] He showed great perseverance, and learned grammar, mathematics, literature,

[1]All the versions of his life which pretend that Makhno was a schoolteacher, and developed under the influence of an Anarchist intellectual, are false, as are many others.

[2]It was in prison that Makhno made the acquaintance of Peter Archinov, condemned like himself to hard labour for being an Anarchist. Archinov, who was relatively well educated, helped him in his studies.

the history of culture and political economy. In fact, prison was the sole school in which Makhno acquired that historical and political knowledge which was a great help to him in his subsequent revolutionary activity. Life, action, deeds were the other schools in which he learned to know and understand men and social events.

"It was in prison, while he was still young, that Makhno endangered his health. Stubborn and unable to accept that complete extinction of personality that those condemned to forced labour underwent, he was always insubordinate to the prison authorities, and was continually in solitary confinement where, because of the cold and damp, he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis. During the nine years of his detention he was frequently in irons for 'bad behaviour', until he was finally released, with all the other political prisoners, by the proletarian insurrection in Moscow on March 1, 1917.

"He soon returned to Gulai-Polya where the peasant masses showed profound sympathy for him. In the whole village, he was the only political prisoner who was returned to his family by the Revolution, and for that reason he became the object of spontaneous respect and confidence for the peasants. He was no longer an inexperienced young man, but a tested militant, with a powerful will and definite ideas about the social conflict.

"At Gulai-Polya, he immediately threw himself into the revolutionary task, first seeking to organise the peasants of his village and its surroundings. He founded a farm-workers' union; he organised a free commune and a local peasants' Soviet. The problem that concerned him most was that of uniting and organising the peasants into a powerful and firm alliance so that they would be able once and for all to drive out the landed gentry and the political rulers, and to manage their own lives. It was to this end that he guided the organisational work of the peasants, both as a propagandist and as a man of action. He sought to unite them in a revolutionary way, turning to account the flagrant deception, injustice and oppression of which they were victims.

"During the period of the Kerensky government and in the October days of 1917, he was President of the Regional Peasants' Union, of the Agricultural Commission, the Union of Metal and Carpentry Workers and, finally, President of the Peasants' and Workers' Soviet of Gulai-Polya. It was in this last capacity that, in August 1917, he assembled all the landed gentry of the region, and made them give him all the documents relating to lands and buildings. He proceeded to take an exact inventory of all this property, and then made a report on it, first at a session of the local Soviet, then at the district congress of Soviets, and finally at the regional congress of Soviets. He proceeded to equalise the

rights of the landed gentry and the rich peasants (*kulaks*) with those of the poor peasant labourers in regard to the use of the land. Following his proposal, the congress decided to let the landlords and *kulaks* have a share of land (as well as tools and livestock) equal to that of the labourers. Several peasant congresses in the governments of Ekaterinoslav, Tauride, Poltava, Kharkov and elsewhere followed the example of the Gulai-Polya region and adopted the same measure.

"During the time Makhno became, in his region, the soul of the peasants' movement which was taking over the lands and goods of the gentry and even, if necessary, executing certain recalcitrant landlords. He thus made himself the mortal enemy of the rich and of the local bourgeois groups."

AT THE TIME of the occupation of the Ukraine by the Austro-Germans, a secret revolutionary committee came into immediate existence, and gave Makhno the task of creating fighting units of peasants and workers to struggle against the invaders and the native rulers.

'He did what he could," Archinov records, "but was forced to retreat with his partisans from the cities of Taganrog, Rostov and Tsaritsin, fighting every step of the way. The local bourgeoisie, who had been strengthened by the military support of the Austro-Germans, put a price on his head, and he had to hide for some time. In revenge, the Ukrainian and German military authorities burned his mother's house and shot his elder brother Emelian, who was a crippled war veteran.

"In June, 1918, Makhno went to Moscow to consult several old Anarchist militants on methods and directions to follow in his revolutionary libertarian work among the peasants of the Ukraine. But the Anarchists whom he met were at this time indecisive and passive in their attitude,[1] and he obtained no satisfactory

[1]This was right after the brutal repression [of the Anarchists] in April, 1918. In his conversation with Makhno, Lenin made a brief reference to this event, pretending that the Moscow Anarchists "were harbouring bandits from all over the place". Makhno asked Lenin if he had definite proof. After an evasive reply by Lenin—he invoked the competence of the Cheka—the conversation was broken off by the introduction of another subject by a Bolshevik [who was present]. Thus Makhno never got the matter cleared up.

suggestions or advice."

It is worth mentioning that during his brief stay in Moscow Makhno had a conversation with the old Anarchist theoretician, Peter Kropotkin, and another with Lenin. He gave a detailed account of them—especially of his conversation with Lenin—in his memoirs. He said that he greatly appreciated certain of Kropotkin's suggestions. As for his interview with Lenin, it dealt with four points, namely: the mentality of the Ukrainian peasants, the immediate prospects for the country, the necessity for the Bolsheviks of creating a regular army (the Red Army), and the discord between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists. The conversation, while of some interest, was too short and superficial to have any real importance. We should mention that the Bolsheviks gave Makhno a certain amount of help in the precautions he took in crossing the Ukrainian frontier and getting home with the least possible risk.

Makhno considered the peasant mass to be a particularly potent historical force. "For a long time," continues Archinov, "he considered the idea of how to organise the vast peasant masses, in order to bring out the revolutionary energy that had been accumulated in them for centuries and to hurl this formidable power against the existing régime of oppression. He felt that the moment had arrived to put this idea into execution."

Therefore, after a brief stay in Moscow, he returned to the Ukraine in July, 1918, seeking to get back to his own Gulai-Polya region.

"The trip was accomplished," says Archinov, "with great difficulty, and very secretly, so as not to fall into the hands of the Hetman's authorities. Once Makhno was almost killed; he was arrested by an Austro-German detachment and was unfortunately carrying libertarian pamphlets at the time. A rich Jew from Gulai-Polya, who had known Makhno personally for a long time, succeeded in saving him by paying a considerable sum of money for his liberation.

"On his way back, the Communists proposed to Makhno that he should select a certain region of the Ukraine and carry on secret revolutionary work there in their name. Naturally, he refused even to discuss this offer; the tasks he had set himself to

accomplish had nothing in common with that of the Bolsheviks."

Back in Gulai-Polya, Makhno came to the decision to die or obtain victory for the peasants, and in no event to leave the region. The news of his return spread rapidly from village to village. He did not delay starting his mission openly among the great masses of peasants, speaking at improvised meetings, writing and distributing letters and tracts. By pen and mouth, he called on the peasants for a decisive struggle against the power of Skoropadsky and the landlords. He declared tirelessly that the workers should now take their fates into their own hands and not let their freedom to act be taken from them. His stirring appeal was heard, in a few weeks, by many villages and whole districts, preparing the masses for the great events of the future.

Besides his appeals, Makhno proceeded immediately to direct action. His first concern was to form a revolutionary military unit, sufficiently strong to guarantee freedom of propaganda and action in the villages and towns and at the same time to begin guerilla operations. This unit was quickly organised, for among the villages there were marvellously combative elements, ready for action. They only lacked a good organiser. Makhno was the man.

His first unit undertook two urgent tasks, namely, pursuing energetically the work of propaganda and organisation among the peasants and carrying on a stubborn armed struggle against all their enemies. The guiding principle of this merciless struggle was as follows. No lord who persecuted the peasants, no policeman of the Hetman, no Russian or German officer who was an implacable enemy of the peasants, deserved any pity; he must be destroyed. All who participated in the oppression of the poor peasants and workers, all who sought to suppress their rights, to exploit their labour, should be executed.

Within two or three weeks, the unit had already become the terror, not only of the local bourgeoisie, but also of the Austro-German authorities. Makhno's field of revolutionary military action was wide—it extended from Lozovaia to Berdiansk, Mariupol and Taganrog, and from Lugansk to Ekaterinoslav, Alexandrovsk and Melitopol.

Rapidity of movement was his special tactic. Thanks to it

and also to the size of the region, he could always appear suddenly where he was least expected. In a short time he enveloped within a circle of iron and fire the whole region in which the local bourgeoisie were re-establishing their power. All those who, during the past two or three months, had succeeded in settling back into their old estates, all those who enslaved the peasants, stole their lands and enjoyed the fruits of their labour, all those who ruled over them as masters, found themselves suddenly under the merciless hand of Makhno and his partisans.

Swift as the wind, intrepid, pitiless towards their enemies, they fell thunderously on some estate, massacred all the sworn enemies of the peasants and disappeared as rapidly as they had come. The next day, Makhno would be more than 100 kilometres away, would appear in some town, massacre the "national guard" (*varta*), officers and noblemen, and vanish before the German troops (despite the fact that they were all prepared for him) had time to realise what had happened. The next day he would be 100 kilometres away, taking action against a detachment of Hungarians who were taking reprisals, or hanging some guards of the *varta*.

Both the *varta* and the Austro-German authorities were alarmed [by Makhno's activities], and several units were sent to capture him. It was in vain. Excellent horsemen since childhood, his partisans could not be caught, for in a day they could cover distances that were impossible for regular cavalry.

Often, as though to mock his enemies, Makhno would suddenly appear in the very centre of Gulai-Polya, or in Polugai, where many Austro-German troops were always stationed, or in some other place where troops were concentrated, killing the officers who fell into his hands and escaping, safe and sound and without leaving the slightest indication of the route he was taking. Or else, when it seemed to his pursuers that they had at last found a fresh trail, when they were expecting to overtake and capture him in a town that had been pointed out to them by some peasant, he himself, in the uniform of the *varta*, would penetrate, along with a small number of his partisans, into the very midst of the enemy, learning their plans and preparations. Then he would set out with a detachment of the guard "in pursuit of Makhno", and would exterminate them on the way.

The whole peasant population gave the partisans devoted, active and skilful support. Everywhere along their routes they were sure of finding, whenever they needed it, a safe lodging, food, horses, even arms. Often the peasants would hide them in their homes at the risk of their own lives. Many times, the inhabitants of some village put the pursuing troops on to a false trail, while Makhno himself and his horsemen were right in the village, or were going in the opposite direction to that which had been pointed out to the pursuers.

Many villages were pitilessly punished for their attitude towards the insurgents, all the men being atrociously beaten with ramrods and some of the more strongly suspected peasants being shot on the spot. Some villages were even burned down in revenge. But nothing could reduce the fierce resistance of the working people to the invaders and their agents, the landed nobility and the counter-revolutionaries.

The partisans held to the following general rule in regard to the Austrian, German and Hungarian troops they encountered: they would kill the officers and set the captured soldiers free. They would suggest that the latter should return to their own countries, tell what the Ukrainian peasants were doing, and work for the Social Revolution. Libertarian literature and sometimes money were distributed among them. Only soldiers known to have been guilty of acts of violence against the peasants were executed. This way of treating the captured Austrian, German and Hungarian soldiers had a certain revolutionary influence upon them.

During this first period of his insurrectionary activity, Makhno was not only the organiser and guide of the peasants, but also a redoubtable avenger of the oppressed people. [Through his initiative] hundreds of nests of the nobility were destroyed, thousands of oppressors and active enemies of the people were mercilessly wiped out.

His bold and resolute method of acting, the rapidity of his appearances and disappearances, the precision of his blows and the manifest impossibility of capturing him, dead or alive, soon made his name famous in the region. It was a name that made the bourgeoisie and the authorities tremble with terror and hatred. On

the other hand, among the working people, it gave rise to feelings of deep satisfaction, pride and hope. To them, Makhno had already become a legendary figure.

And in Makhno's character and his actions there were in fact qualities worthy of legend: his extraordinary boldness, his stubborn will, his resourcefulness in all circumstances and, finally, the delightful humour that frequently accompanied his actions—all these qualities impressed the people.

But these were not all the important qualities in Makhno's personality. The warlike spirit that was shown in his insurrectionary undertakings of this early period of his activity, was only the first manifestation of an enormous talent as a warrior and organiser, only later revealed in its full scope. Not merely a remarkable military guide and organiser, but also a good agitator, Makhno constantly increased the number of meetings that took place in the region where he operated. He made reports on the tasks of the moment, on the Social Revolution, on the free and independent communal life for the workers that was the final goal of the insurrection. He also published pamphlets to this effect, as well as appeals to the peasants and workers, the Austrian and German soldiers, the Don and Kuban cossacks, etc.

"Conquer or die—such is the dilemma which faces the Ukrainian peasants and workers at this historic moment. But we cannot all die, for we are innumerable—we are mankind! Therefore we will conquer . . . But we will not conquer in order to repeat the errors of the past years, that of putting our fate into the hands of new masters. We will conquer in order to take our destinies into our own hands, to conduct our lives according to our own will and our own conception of the truth." Thus, in the words of one of his first appeals, Makhno spoke to the vast masses of the Russian peasants.

CHAPTER 2
Formation of the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army

SOON MAKHNO became the rallying point for all the insurgents [in his region]. In every village, the peasants created secret local groups. They rallied to Makhno, supported him in all his undertakings, followed his advice and suggestions. Many detachments of partisans—those already in existence as well as newly formed ones—joined his groups seeking co-ordinated action. The need for unity and activity on a general scale was recognised by all the revolutionary partisans. And all were of the opinion that this unity would best be achieved under Makhno's direction. Such was also the opinion of several large bands of insurgents who until then had been independent of one another. Notable among these were the large band commanded by Kurilenko (who operated in the Berdiansk region), that commanded by Stchouss (in the Dibrivka region), and that of Petrenko-Platonov (in the Grichino region). They all spontaneously joined Makhno. In this way the unification of the detached units of partisans in the southern Ukraine into a single insurrectionary army under Makhno's supreme command came about naturally, through the force of events and the will of the masses.

The vast and irrepressible peasant insurrection finally succeeded in completely disorganising the occupation troops and the Hetman's police. The counter-revolution, supported by foreign bayonets, steadily lost ground. The end of the war and the political turmoil that followed in Germany and Austria gave it the *coup de grâce*. At the end of 1918, the German and Austrian troops left the country. The Hetman and the landlords fled once again, this time never to return.

From this moment, three very different basic forces were active in the Ukraine: Petlurism, Bolshevism and Makhnovism. We have spoken enough about Bolshevism for the reader to recognise,

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without difficulty and without our having to explain them, its goals and tactics in the Ukraine. And we have just given an adequate explanation of the independent peasant movement called Makhnovism.

It remains for us to describe briefly the essential nature and the activity of the Petlurist movement. From the first days of the Revolution of February, 1917, the Ukrainian liberal bourgeoisie, fearing the "excesses" of the "Muscovite" revolution and seeking to avoid them in their own country, came out in favour of the national independence of the Ukraine. Once Tsarism was overthrown, they could try to achieve this with some hope of success, since all of the Left Russian political parties had solemnly proclaimed the right of the peoples to do in full liberty whatever they wished with their own lives.

Supported by several other strata of the Ukrainian population, such as the rich peasants (*kulaks*), the liberal intellectuals, etc., the bourgeoisie created a vast autonomist, nationalist and separatist movement, which envisaged complete detachment from the "Pan-Russian" State. Realising, however, that the movement could not hope for substantial and lasting success unless it developed a popular armed force on which it could depend in case of need, the guides of the movement, Simon Petlura and others, turned their attention to the mass of Ukrainian soldiers at the front and behind the lines. They proceeded to organise them, on a national basis, into special Ukrainian regiments.

In May 1917, the leaders of the movement organised a military congress which elected a general military committee, to direct the movement. Later this committee was enlarged and named the *Rada* (Council, in Ukrainian). In November 1917, at the Pan-Ukrainian congress, this became the Central *Rada*, a kind of parliament of the new Ukrainian Democratic Republic. Finally, a month later, the Central *Rada* solemnly proclaimed the independence of this Republic.

This event was a serious blow to Bolshevism, which had just taken power in Great Russia, and naturally wanted to establish itself in the Ukraine, despite the "rights of the peoples". Therefore, the Bolsheviks, in all haste, sent their troops into that region. A furious struggle took place between them and Petlura's detachments, around Kiev, the Ukrainian capital. On January 25th, 1918,

the Bolsheviks took the city, installed their government, and soon began to extend their power throughout the Ukraine.

They only succeeded partially. The Petlura government, the politicians of the separatist movement, and their troops, retired into the western part of the country where they dug in and protested against the occupation of the Ukraine by the Bolsheviks. It is probable that a little later the latter would have set forth to extinguish the autonomist movement. But the immediate situation prevented this. In March and April, 1918, they retreated into Great Russia, giving way to the Austro-German army of occupation in conformity to the clauses of the Brest-Litovsk treaty.

Soon, preceding the Austro-Germans, the Petlurists re-entered Kiev. Their government proclaimed the new National Ukrainian Republic. This also only lasted for a few weeks. It was much more to the advantage of the Austro-Germans to come to terms with the old lords and masters of the Ukraine than with the Petlurists. With the support of their military forces, the Germans unceremoniously deposed the republican government and replaced it with the absolute authority of their regent: the Hetman Skoropadsky. Petlura himself was imprisoned for some time and had to disappear temporarily from the political arena.

But the disintegration of the Hetman's régime was not long in coming. The immense peasant insurrection soon began to deliver powerful blows at him. Recognising Skoropadsky's weakness, the *Petlurovtzi* went energetically to work. Circumstances favoured them. The peasants being in revolt, hundreds of thousands of insurgents were only waiting for an appeal to march against the Hetman's government. Since they possessed sufficient means to assemble, organise and arm a part of these forces, the *Petlurovtzi* advanced and took several large cities and districts almost without resistance. They subjected the provinces thus conquered to a new kind of power: the "Directorate", with Petlura at its head. Thus they quickly extended their power over a good part of the Ukraine, taking advantage of the absence of other aspirants, especially the Bolsheviks.

In December 1918, Skoropadsky fled and Petlura's "Directorate" solemnly entered Kiev. This event excited great enthusiasm in the country, while the *Petlurovtzi* did everything they could to

magnify their success, and posed as national heroes.

In a short time, their power again extended over the major part of the Ukraine. It was only in the south, in the region of the Makhnovist peasants' movement, that they encountered serious resistance. There they had no success; on the contrary, they experienced several serious reverses.

Nevertheless, in all the great cities of the country the Petlurists triumphed, and this time the domination of the autonomist bourgeoisie seemed assured. But this success was illusory. The new power had hardly had time to install itself when it began to disintegrate. Millions of peasants and workers who, at the moment of the overthrow of the Hetman, were within the orbit of the *Petlurovtzi* were soon disillusioned and began to leave Petlura's ranks *en masse*.

"They sought another vehicle for their interests and aspirations. The major part dispersed into the cities and villages and there adopted a hostile attitude toward the new power. Others joined the insurrectionary bands of the Makhnovists. The *Petlurovtzi* were thus as soon disarmed as they had been armed by the march of events. Their idea of bourgeois autonomy, bourgeois national unity, could only last for a few hours among the revolutionary people. The burning breath of the popular revolution reduced this false idea to ashes and left its supporters in complete impotence. At the same time, military Bolshevism was rapidly approaching, from the north, expert in methods of class agitation and firmly resolved to take power in the Ukraine. Just one month after the entry of Petlura's Directorate into Kiev, the Bolshevik troops entered in their turn. From there, the Communists' power was extended over the greater part of the Ukraine." (P. Archinov, *op. cit.*, p. 106.)

Thus, soon after the fall of the Hetman and the departure of the Austro-Germans, the Moscow government hastened to reinstate in the Ukraine its authority, its functionaries, its cadres of militants and especially its troops and police.

But in the western and southern parts it was soon halted, on the one hand by the nationalist elements of Petlura, who had retired there once more, and on the other, by the authentic independent movement of the peasant masses, guided by Makhno. Petlura,

chased from the heart of the country, did not consider himself beaten; having retired into the region least accessible to the Bolsheviks, he tried to resist—wherever he could—both them and Makhno's "peasant bands". As for the independent peasant movement, it was soon obliged to face not only Petlura's bourgeoisie (before going into action, subsequently, against the monarchist attempts of Denikin and Wrangel) but also the usurpations of the Bolsheviks. Thus, the situation in the Ukraine became more complicated than ever. Each of the three forces present had to fight the other two: the Bolsheviks against Petlura; Petlura, against the Bolsheviks and Makhno; Makhno against Petlura and the Bolsheviks. Later, this confusion was further complicated by the appearance of a fourth element, the intervention of nationalist and monarchist Russian generals seeking to re-establish the old Russian Empire in its historical integrity and on its absolute basis. From that moment (summer, 1919) each of the four forces carried on a bitter struggle against the other three.

We must add that in these chaotic circumstances the Ukraine became a free field for the exploits and audacious sorties of real gangs of armed bandits, composed of elements dislocated by the aftermath of war and the Revolution and living by pure brigandage. Such bands overran the country in all directions; they had hideouts in every corner; they operated almost without interference in the central Ukraine.[1]

It is easy to imagine the fantastic chaos in which the country was plunged and the improbable combinations which were formed, broken, and reformed during the three years of fighting (from the end of 1918 to 1921) until Bolshevism finally prevailed over the others.

We must add, and emphasise, with Archinov, that the whole activity of the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine was pure usurpation, imposed by force of arms, a usurpation that they did not even try to conceal.

[1]Much later, the Bolsheviks, using their habitual method of slander, tried to identify the independent peasant movement and Makhno personally with these counter-revolutionary bandit elements. From what has been said, the reader should already be able to recognise the facts, and the difference between the men and the myths.

Installing their government first at Kharkov, then at Kiev, they sent their troops through the regions already liberated from the power of the Hetman and created the organs of Communist power by military force.

"When the Bolsheviks occupied some place by main force, and had driven out Petlura's partisans, as well as in places where the region was free and the workers their own masters, the Communist Power was established by military order. The workers' and peasants' councils (Soviets) which had supposedly created this power appeared later, the deed having been accomplished and the power already consolidated. Before the Soviets, there were 'revolutionary committees' and before the 'committees' there were simply the military divisions." (P. Archinov, *op. cit.*, p.129).

WE HAVE SEEN that, because of many special circumstances, the *social revolution* began in the Ukraine, not through the seizure of power by a political party of the extreme Left, but, without any question of power, through an immense spontaneous revolt of the peasants against their new oppressors.

In the beginning, this revolt was like a tempest. With exasperated fury, the peasant masses devoted themselves to the violent destruction of all that they hated, all that had oppressed them for centuries. At this time no positive element appeared in the work of destruction. But little by little, events developed, the movement of the revolutionary peasants became organised and unified, and realised ever more precisely its fundamental constructive tasks.

Since we can only summarise events and must leave out many details, we will set forth immediately the *essential characteristics of the Makhnovist movement*, characteristics which manifested themselves increasingly during the events that followed the collapse of the Hetman's régime and the end of the German occupation.

These characteristics of the movement can be divided into two different groups: the virtues and merits, on the one hand, and the weakness and mistakes, on the other, for the Makhnovist movement was not irreproachable, and some of its failings allowed the Bolsheviks to slander and defame it.

The advantages of the movement were:

1. Its complete independence of all tutelage, of any party, of politics in any form and from any source—the really libertarian spirit of the movement. This fundamental and highly important quality was due (*a*) to the initial spontaneity of the peasant insurrection; (*b*) to the personal influence of the libertarian Makhno; (*c*) to the activity of other libertarian elements in the region (Makhno being himself absorbed by the task of fighting did his best to attract other libertarians who were able to work in complete freedom); (*d*) to the lessons taught by the experiences of the insurgents in their day-to-day contacts with political parties. This libertarian tendency of the movement manifested itself in a deep-rooted defiance of the non-working or privileged elements, in a refusal of dictatorship over the people by any organisation, and in the idea of a free and complete self-administration by the workers themselves of their local affairs.

2. The free, federative (and hence more solid) co-ordination of all the forces of the movement into a vast, freely organised and disciplined social movement.

3. The healthy and advanced ideological influence which the movement exercised over a wide section of the country, containing some seven million inhabitants.

4. The incomparable fighting valour of the revolutionary peasant army, an army which, despite its perpetual lack of weapons and ammunition, despite the constant and shameful betrayals which it suffered, despite other terrible difficulties, was able to resist for nearly four years all the usurpations and all the forces of oppression [active in the Ukraine].

5. The organisational and strategic and military genius, as well as the other exceptional qualities of that guide of the fighting nucleus of the movement, the anarchist Nestor Makhno.

6. The rapidity with which the peasant masses and the insurgents, despite extremely unfavourable circumstances, became acquainted with libertarian ideas and sought to apply them.

7. Certain positive achievements which the movement made, in so far as circumstances permitted, in economics and in the field of social and revolutionary militancy.

The disadvantages of the movement were:

1. The almost continual necessity of fighting and defending itself against all kinds of enemies, without being able to concentrate on peaceful and truly positive works.

2. The continued existence of an army within the movement. For an army, of whatever kind it may be, always and inevitably ends by being affected by certain serious faults, by a special kind of evil mentality.

3. The insufficiency of libertarian intellectual forces within the movement.

4. Certain personal defects of Makhno. Outside of his organisational and military genius, his libertarian ardour and his other remarkable military qualities, Makhno possessed serious weaknesses of character and education. In certain respects, he was not equal to his task. These weaknesses—we will have occasion to return to them—diminished the scope and the moral significance of the movement.

5. A certain casualness, a lack of necessary distrust, towards the Communists.

6. The absence of a vigorous organised workers' movement, which could support that of the peasant insurgents.

7. The constant shortage of arms and ammunition. The Makhnovists nearly always had to arm themselves with weapons captured in combat from their enemies.

But let us return to the events, for throughout the account that follows we will have occasion to observe both the merits and defects of the movement sufficiently to be able to judge it as a whole.

In October 1918, Makhno's detachments, united into a revolutionary army of partisans, began a general attack on the Hetman Skoropadsky's forces. In November, the German and Austrian troops were completely disoriented both by the events on the western front, and by those inside the country they were occupying. Makhno took advantage of this state of affairs. In certain places, he treated with these troops, obtained their neutrality and even managed to disarm them without difficulty, thus gaining possession of their arms and ammunition. Elsewhere, he defeated them in

battle. For example, after a bitter fight of three days, he occupied the whole of Gulai-Polya.

Everywhere the end of the Hetman's régime was expected. The Ukrainian troops and the Hetman's guard (*varta*) were nearly all dispersed before the extraordinary growth of the insurrectionary movement. The young peasants flowed *en masse* into Makhno's army, which was unable to arm all these volunteers and had to turn most of them away. Nevertheless, the Makhnovist insurgent army [was already able to equip] several regiments of infantry and cavalry, while it also had a little artillery and many machine-guns.

Soon it had become master of a very large region, which was liberated of all power. But the Hetman still held Kiev. Makhno therefore set out for the north. He occupied the important railroad stations at Tchaplino, Grichino and Sinelnikova, and the city of Pavlograd. He then turned west, in the direction of Ekaterinoslav.

There he encountered the organised and completely equipped forces of Petlura. At this period, the *petlurovtzi* considered the Makhnovist movement an important episode in the Ukrainian revolution. Not knowing it well, they hoped to attract these "bands of rebels" into their sphere of influence and place them under their own control. Very amicably, they addressed to Makhno a series of political questions: What was his opinion of the Petlurist movement and Petlura's government? How did he conceive the future political structure of the Ukraine? Would he not find it desirable and useful to work in common for the creation of an independent Ukraine?

The Makhnovists' reply was to the point. They declared, that in their opinion *Petlurovtchina* was a bourgeois nationalist movement whose road was entirely different from that of the revolutionary peasants, that the Ukraine should be organised on a basis of free labour and the independence of the peasants and workers, that they did not accept union with anyone, and that nothing but struggle was possible between *Makhnovitchina,* the movement of the workers, and the *Petlurovtchina,* the movement of the bourgeoisie.

The events which followed this "exchange of views" illustrate the kind of tangle that was common in the struggles of the Ukraine.

Makhno's army stopped at Nijne-Dnieprovsk, a suburb of Ekaterinoslav and prepared to attack the city. There was also a Bolshevik committee there, who possessed a few troops, but not enough for action. Makhno being known in the region as a valiant revolutionist and a very gifted military guide, this "Committee" offered him the command of the party's workers' detachments. Makhno accepted.

As he often did, he had recourse to a ruse, which was full of risk but promised a great deal if it should succeed. He loaded a train with his troops and sent it from Nijne-Dnieprovsk right into the railway station of Ekaterinoslav. As he knew, such trains brought the working people from the suburbs into Ekaterinoslav, and usually they passed through without obstacle or inspection. If, by chance, the ruse had been discovered before the train stopped, the whole troop would have been taken prisoner. But it went through unhindered and stopped in the station. In an instant the Makhnovists occupied the station and its surroundings. A fierce battle broke out in the city. The Petlurists were defeated. They beat a retreat and abandoned Ekaterinoslav. They were not pursued, for Makhno contented himself, for the moment, with taking possession of the town and reorganising his forces.

A few days later, the Petlurists counterattacked with reinforcements, beat Makhno's army and regained the city. But they in turn did not feel strong enough to pursue the Makhnovists. The Insurrectionary Army retreated again into the Sinelnikovo region, where it dug in and established a front between itself and the Petlurists on the north-west frontier of the insurgent region.

Petlura's troops, composed chiefly of insurgent peasants, or conscripts, rapidly disintegrated upon contact with the Makhnovists, and soon this front melted away without a battle. Later, Ekaterinoslav was occupied by the Bolsheviks who, for the moment, did not risk going beyond the city. Makhno did not feel that his forces were sufficient to hold both Ekaterinoslav and the vast liberated region. He decided to leave the city to the Bolsheviks and only ensure control of the frontiers of his region. Thus, to the south and east of Ekaterinoslav, a vast area of several thousand square kilometres was free from all authority and all troops. At Ekaterinoslav the Bolsheviks ruled, and to the west the Petlurists dominated the country.

THE MAKHNOVIST PEASANTS took advantage of the freedom and relative peacefulness of their region—which unfortunately was of short duration—to accomplish certain positive tasks.

For some six months, from December 1918 to June 1919, the peasants of Gulai-Polya lived without any political power. Not only did they not break the social bonds between them, but, quite to the contrary, they created new forms of social organisation: free workers' communes and Soviets.

Later on, the Makhnovists formulated their social ideas—and particularly their conception of the Soviets—in a pamphlet entitled "General Theses of the Revolutionary Insurgents (Makhnovists) concerning the Free Workers' Soviet." According to the insurgents, the Soviets should be absolutely independent of all political parties; they should be part of a general economic system based on social equality, their members should be real workers, should serve the interests of the working masses and obey only their will, and their initiators should not exercise any power.

As for the communes, in several places attempts were made to organise social life on a communal, just and equalitarian basis, and the very peasants who showed themselves hostile to the official communes [of the Bolsheviks] proceeded enthusiastically to set up free communes.

The first commune, called "Rosa Luxemburg", was organised near the town of Prokovskoie. At first it only contained a few dozen members, but later the number exceeded three hundred. This commune was created by the poorest peasants of the locality. In consecrating it to the memory of Rosa Luxemburg, they gave witness to their impartiality and nobility of sentiment. They had known for some time that Rosa Luxemburg was a martyr of the revolutionary struggle in Germany. The basic principles of the commune did not correspond at all to the doctrines for which Rosa Luxemburg had struggled. But the peasants justly wanted to honour a victim of the social struggle. This commune was based on the non-authoritarian principle. It accomplished very good results and ultimately exercised a great influence over the peasants of the neighbourhood.[1]

[1]It was destroyed on June 9 and 10, 1919, by the Bolsheviks during their general campaign against the Makhnovist region.

Seven kilometres from Gulai-Polya another commune was established, which was simply called "Commune No. 1 of the Gulai-Polya Peasants." It was also the work of poor peasants. Twenty kilometres away were communes Nos. 2 and 3. There were also some in other places.

All these communes were created freely, by a spontaneous impulse of the peasants themselves, with the help of a few good organisers, for the purpose of providing the necessities of life for the working people. They had no resemblance to the artificial and so-called "exemplary communes" which were run very inefficiently by the Communist authorities, where there were usually assembled ill-assorted elements, who had been gathered together at random, and were incapable of doing serious work. These so-called "communes" of the Bolsheviks did nothing but waste grain and ruin the land. Subsidised by the State, that is by the government, they lived off the labour of the people while pretending to teach them to work.

The communes [at Gulai-Polya] with which we are here concerned were real working communes. They gathered authentic peasants, accustomed from infancy to hard work. They were based on real material mutual aid and on the principle of equality. Everyone—men, women and children—had to work, each to the extent of his ability. The organising functions were confided to comrades who could fulfil them adequately. Their task accomplished, these comrades rejoined the common work side by side with the other members of the commune. These, sound, serious principles were due to the fact that the communes arose from the workers themselves and their development followed a natural course.

The Makhnovist partisans never exerted any pressure on the peasants, confining themselves to propagating the idea of free communes. The latter were formed on the initiative of the poor peasants themselves.

It is interesting and significant to observe that the ideas and activities of the Makhnovist peasants were similar in all respects to those of the Kronstadt rebels in 1921. This proves that when the labouring masses have the opportunity of thinking, seeking and acting freely, they gradually find the same course, whatever

the place, the surroundings, or even—we might add—the time, as one can see by examining previous revolutions. Independent of all other reasoning, this should lead us to believe that, on the whole, this course is the *right, just and true course for the workers.* To be sure, for many reasons, the labouring masses have up to the present never been able to keep to this course. But the possibility of not abandoning it, or following it to the end, is only a question of time and development.

The constructive activity of the peasants was not confined to these experiments in free communism. Tasks that were much vaster and more important were not slow in presenting themselves. It was necessary to find a common practical solution for various problems which concerned the whole region, and for this it was indispensable to establish general institutions, first embracing a district, later a department, and finally the whole region.

The peasants did not fail. They had recourse to periodic congresses of peasants, workers and partisans. During the period that the region remained free, there were three such regional congresses. They permitted the peasants to strengthen their contacts, to orient themselves more certainly in the complex circumstances of the moment, and to determine clearly the economic, social and other tasks that had to be done.

The First Regional Congress took place on January 23rd, 1919, in the town of Greater Mikhailovka. It was primarily concerned with the danger of the reactionary movements of Petlura and Denikin. The Petlurists were in the process of reorganising their forces in the west of the country for a new offensive. As for Denikin, his preparations for civil war disturbed the peasants and partisans still more. The congress formulated measures for resistance to the two forces. Moreover, patrol action, increasingly important, was already occurring nearly every day on the south-eastern border of the region.

The Second Congress met three weeks later, on February 12, 1919, at Gulai-Polya. Unfortunately, the imminent danger of an offensive by Denikin against the free region prevented the congress from devoting itself to the problems, however important, of peaceful construction. The sessions were entirely occupied by questions of defence and fighting against the new invaders.

The insurrectionary army of the *Makhnovtzi* numbered at this moment around 20,000 volunteer fighters. But many of them were worn out by fatigue, having had to fight incessantly on the frontier against Denikin's advance guard and other attempts at penetration. Moreover, Denikin's troops were rapidly growing stronger.

After long and passionate debates, the congress resolved to call all the inhabitants of the region to a *general voluntary and equalitarian mobilisation.* By "voluntary mobilisation" it meant that while this appeal, sanctioned by the moral authority of the congress, emphasised the need for fresh troops in the insurrectionary army, no one was compelled to enlist: the appeal was directed to everyone's conscience and good will. By "equalitarian mobilisation" it meant that in filling out the army, attention would be given to the personal situation of each volunteer, so that the weight of the mobilisation would be distributed and supported by the population as equally and justly as possible.

As a kind of general directing body for the fight against Petlura and Denikin, to maintain and support, during the fighting, the economic and social relations among the workers themselves and also between them and the partisans, to take care of the needs for information and control, finally to put into practice the various measures which were adopted by the congress and which might be taken up by succeeding conferences, this Second Congress established a regional Revolutionary Military Council (Soviet) of peasants, workers and partisans.

This council embraced the whole free region. It was supposed to carry out all the economic, political, social and military decisions made at the congress. It was thus, in a certain sense, the supreme executive of the whole movement. *But it was not at all an authoritarian organ.* Only strictly executive functions were assigned to it. It confined itself to carrying out the instructions and decisions of the congress. At any moment, it could be dissolved by the congress and cease to exist.

Once the resolutions of this Second Congress were made known to the peasants of the region, each new town and village began to send to Gulai-Polya, *en masse,* new volunteers desiring to go to the front against Denikin. The number of these new

fighters was enormous and surpassed all expectations. If it had been possible to arm and train all of them, the tragic events which followed would never have occurred. Moreover, the whole Russian Revolution might have been switched to a new course. The "miracle" which the libertarians had hoped for might have happened.

Unfortunately, arms were scarce in the region. That is why they did not succeed in forming new detachments at the opportune moment. They had to turn away ninety per cent. of the volunteers who came to enlist. This had unavoidable consequences for the region during Denikin's general offensive in June 1919.

CHAPTER 3
Denikin's Offensives and Final Defeat

"THE STATISTS," as Archinov says with good reason, "fear the free people. They maintain that without authority the latter would lose the anchor of sociability, that they would disperse and return to the savage state. These are certainly absurd ideas, held by idlers, lovers of authority and the labour of others, or by the blind thinkers of bourgeois society."

Already, the mortal enemy of the world of labour and its freedom—authority—was pressing closely on the region [of the Ukraine]. It threatened from two sides at once. From the south-east the army of General Denikin was coming up. From the north the army of the Communist state was descending. Denikin arrived first.

From the first days after the fall of the Hetman Skoropadsky, several counter-revolutionary detachments commanded by General Chkouro, operating as patrols, had infiltrated into the Ukraine along the Don and Kuban rivers and had approached Polugui and Gulai-Polya. This was the first threat of the new counter-revolution against the liberated region.

Naturally, the Makhnovist insurgent army moved to this side. Its infantry and cavalry were well organised and commanded, fairly well armed and full of ardour and enthusiasm. The infantry, indeed, were equipped in a very unusual and original way. They moved like cavalry with the aid of horses, not on horseback but in light carriages with springs, called *tatchanka* in the southern Ukraine. Travelling at a fast trot, the same speed as the cavalry, these infantry could easily move from sixty to seventy kilometres a day, and even, if necessary, ninety to a hundred. As for the Makhnovist cavalry, it was certainly among the best in the world. Its attacks were furious and irresistible.

It must not be forgotten that many of these revolutionary

peasants had fought in the 1914 war, and thus were trained and proven fighting men. This was of great importance, for it permitted the peasant population to relieve, to some extent, the fatigue of the Makhnovist fighters. In fact, at certain specially exposed sections of the front, a few hundred peasants from the neighbourhood would regularly replace the exhausted fighters. The latter turned over their arms to them and went home. After two or three weeks of rest, they returned to resume their place at the front.

We should add that the peasants also assumed responsibility, from the beginning, for regularly supplying the Insurrectionary Army with food and fodder. A central provisioning section was organised at Gulai-Polya. Supplies were brought there from every direction to be sent to the front.

Denikin did not at all anticipate the stubborn resistance of the Makhnovists. Moreover, he counted on an imminent struggle between Petlura's Directorate and the Bolsheviks. He hoped to take advantage of this state of affairs to beat both easily and establish his front—at least for the start—beyond the northern limits of the province of Ekaterinoslav. But he unexpectedly encountered the excellent and tenacious Insurrectionary Army.

After the first battles, Denikin's detachments had to beat a retreat in the direction of the Don and the Sea of Azov. In a short space of time, all the territory from Polugui to the sea was liberated. The Makhnovist partisans occupied several important railway stations and cities, such as Berdiansk and Mariupol. It was from this moment—January 1919—that the first front against Denikin was firmly established. It was later extended for more than 100 kilometres to the east and north-east of Mariupol.

Naturally, Denikin did not give up. He continued and intensified his attacks and infiltrations. For six months, the Makhnovists held back this counter-revolutionary flood. The fighting was stubborn and fierce, for General Chkouro also had excellent cavalry. Moreover, he used the partisans' tactics; his detachments would penetrate deep into the rear of the Makhnovist army, then spread out rapidly, destroying, burning and massacring all they could reach; then they would disappear like magic, and appear suddenly in another place to commit the same destruction.

It was exclusively the labouring people who suffered from

these incursions. They [the Denikinists] took revenge for the help the peasants gave to the Insurrectionary Army, and for their hostility towards the Denikinists. They hoped thus to provoke a reaction against the Revolution. The Jewish population, which had lived for a very long time in special colonies of the Azov region, also suffered from these raids. The Denikinists massacred the Jews on every visit, thus seeking to provoke a popular anti-Jewish movement which would have facilitated their task.

However, despite their well-trained and well-armed troops, despite their furious attacks, the Denikinists could not subdue the insurrectionary troops, full of revolutionary ardour and quite as skilful at guerilla warfare. On the contrary during the six months of furious fighting, General Chkouro more than once received such blows from the Makhnovist regiments that only precipitous retreats of from eighty to one hundred and twenty kilometres saved him from complete disaster. During this period, the Makhnovists advanced at least five or six times almost to the walls of Taganrog. At this moment, only the lack of men and weapons prevented Makhno from destroying Denikin's counter-revolution.

The hatred and fury of the Denikinist officers towards the Makhnovists reached incredible heights. They submitted their prisoners to refined tortures. Often they mangled them by exploding shells. And several cases are known—they were mentioned, with full details, in the insurgent press—where prisoners were roasted alive on sheets of red hot iron.

In the course of the fighting, Makhno's military talent was revealed in a striking manner. His reputation as a remarkable war leader was recognised even by his enemies, the Denikinists. But this did not prevent General Denikin from offering half a million roubles to whomever killed or captured Makhno.

During this whole period, the relations between the Makhnovists and the Bolsheviks remained distant but amicable. One fact emphasised this. In January 1919 the Makhnovists, having thrown back the Denikinists towards the Sea of Azov after a hard fight, captured a hundred carloads of wheat from them. The first thought of Makhno and the staff of the Insurrectionary Army was to send this booty to the starving workers of Moscow and Petrograd. This idea was enthusiastically accepted by the mass of

the insurgents. The hundred carloads of wheat were delivered to Moscow and Petrograd accompanied by a Makhnovist delegation which was very warmly received by the Moscow Soviet.

THE BOLSHEVIKS APPEARED in the region of the Makhnovist movement much later than Denikin. The insurgents had already been fighting the latter for several months; they had driven him out of their region and established their line of defence to the east of Mariupol when the first Bolshevik divisions, coming from the north and commanded by Dybenko, arrived without interference at Sinelnikovo.

At this point Makhno himself, like the whole insurrectionary movement, was essentially unknown to the Bolsheviks. Until then he had been spoken of in the Communist press as a bold insurgent of great promise. His fight with Skoropadsky, then with Petlura and Denikin, brought him the goodwill of the Bolshevik leaders who, naturally enough, hoped to incorporate his army into theirs. So they sang Makhno's praises in advance, and devoted whole columns in their newspapers to him, without having made his acquaintance.

"The first meeting between the Bolshevik fighters and Makhno's men took place in March, 1919, under the same auspices of praise and goodwill," Peter Archinov records. "Makhno was immediately invited to join the Red Army with all his detachments in order to provide a united front for the purpose of defeating Denikin. The political and ideological differences between the Bolsheviks and the Makhnovist peasants were not considered an obstacle to a union on the basis of a common cause. The Bolsheviks let it be understood that the special characteristics of the Insurrectionary Army would not be violated.

"Makhno and his staff were perfectly aware that the arrival of Communist authority was a new threat to the liberty of the region; they saw it as a probable omen of civil war of a new kind. But neither they nor the army nor the Regional Soviet wanted this war, which might well have a fatal effect on the whole Ukrainian revolution. They did not lose sight of the open and well-organised counter-revolution which was approaching from the Don and the Kuban, and with which there was only one possible relationship—that of armed conflict.

"This danger increased from day to day. The insurgents retained some hope that the struggle with the Bolsheviks could be confined to the realm of ideas. In this event, they could feel perfectly secure about their region, for the vigour of the libertarian theory, together with the revolutionary common sense of the peasants and their defiance of elements foreign to their free movement were the best guarantee of the region's freedom.

"According to the general opinion of the guides of the insurrection, it was necessary for the movement to concentrate all forces against the monarchist reaction and not be concerned with ideological disagreements with the Bolsheviks until that was liquidated. It was in this context that the union between the Makhnovists and the Red Army took place."

Here are the essential clauses of the agreement [that was entered into by the two armies]. "i. The Insurrectionary Army will retain its internal organisation intact. ii. It will receive Political Commissars appointed by the Communist authorities. iii. It will only be subordinated to the Red supreme command in strictly military matters. iv. It cannot be removed from the front against Denikin.[1] v. It will receive munitions and supplies equal to those of the Red Army. vi. It will retain its name of Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army and its black flags" (the black flag is the Anarchist flag).

We should specify that at the same time Makhno's army was baptised the "Third Brigade". Later it became the "First Revolutionary Insurrectionary Division", and still later it became independent again and adopted the definite name of "Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of the Ukraine (Makhnovist)."

The most important point for the Makhnovist army was naturally the retention of its internal organisation. It was thus not an act of "organic" incorporation into the Red Army that took place, but only a pact of close co-operation.

Here I will pause to discuss some of the features of this internal organisation of the Insurrectionary Army. This organi-

[1]This clause was a precaution on the part of the Makhnovists. They feared in fact, that under some pretext or another the Red command would send the Insurrectionary Army to some other front, so that they could establish the Bolshevik power in the region wihout interference. As the reader will see presently, this fear was fully justified by subsequent events.

sation was based on three fundamental principles: 1. Voluntary enlistment; 2. Eligibility of all for command posts; 3. Freely accepted discipline.

Voluntary Enlistment meant that the army was composed only of revolutionary fighters who entered it of their own free will.

Eligibility for Command Posts meant that the commanders of all the units of the army, including the staff, as well as all the men who held other important positions in the army, were either elected or accepted without reservation (if they happened to be appointed in urgent situations by the commander himself) by the insurgents of the unit in question or by the whole army.

Freely Accepted Discipline was achieved in the following way. All the rules of discipline were drawn up by commissions of insurgents, then approved by general assemblies of the various units. Once approved, they had to be rigorously observed on the individual responsibility of each insurgent and each commander.

The alliance between the Bolsheviks and the Insurrectionary Army was strictly military. All political questions were voluntarily excluded. This left the working people of the region free to follow, despite the alliance, the same course of economic and social evolution, or rather, revolution, that they had been pursuing, the absolutely free and independent activity of workers who accepted no power.

We shall see presently that this was the sole cause of the break between the Bolsheviks and the partisans, of the vile and cynical accusations levelled by the former against the latter, and of the armed aggression of the Communists against the free region.

SINCE THE CREATION of the Regional Soviet in February, 1919, the working people [of the Makhnovist areas] considered themselves united and organised, and this feeling of solidarity induced the peasants to deal with other concrete problems of great urgency.

They began by organising everywhere free local Soviets. In the circumstances of the time, this task was accomplished slowly, but the peasants held consistently to the idea, feeling that it was the only sound basis on which a really free community could be constructed.

Soon the problem of direct and solid union between the peasants and the urban workers arose. In the opinion of the former, such a union should be established directly with the workers' enterprises and organisations, outside of political parties, of the organs of the state or intermediary functionaries. They felt intuitively that this was indispensable for the consolidation and subsequent development of the Revolution. At the same time, they were perfectly aware that its accomplishment would inevitably provoke a struggle with the state and government party, the Communists, who would certainly not renounce their hold over the masses without a struggle. However, the peasants did not feel that this danger was too serious, for they considered that once they and the workers were united they could easily defy any political power that tried to subdue them. In any event, the free and direct union of the peasants and workers seemed the only natural and fruitful way of finally achieving a true and emancipatory revolution and of eliminating all those elements that might impede, deform or stifle it. It was in this context that the problem of union with the city workers was raised and discussed, until it finally became an objective of the whole insurrectionary region.

It goes without saying that with such an attitude on the part of the people and with plans of this kind being made, the political parties, and especially the Communists, could have no success in the Makhnovist area. When these parties appeared there with statist programmes and plans of organisation, they were received coldly, indifferently, sometimes even hostilely. Often their militants and agents were criticised openly as people who came uninvited to meddle in other people's affairs. The Communist authorities who infiltrated into all parts of the region and who posed as masters were made to understand clearly that they were considered intruders and imposters.

At first the Bolsheviks hoped to overcome this passive resistance by absorbing the Makhnovist army into the ranks of the Red Army and then having their hands free to reduce the population to obedience. They soon learned that this hope was in vain. The peasants of the region did not want to have anything to do with Bolshevik government agents. They ignored and boycotted them; sometimes they even maltreated them. In certain

places the armed peasants drove out of their villages the "Extraordinary Commissions" (Cheka), and at Gulai-Polya the Communists never even dared to establish such an institution. In other places, the attempts to implant Communist administration resulted in bloody collisions between the population and the authorities, whose situation became very difficult. As for the Makhnovist army, it was intractable.

It was [when they realised the true nature of the situation] that the Bolsheviks began an organised and methodical fight against Makhnovism, both as an idea and as a social movement. As usual, the press started the campaign. When the order was given, it began to criticise the insurrectionary movement, treating it more and more as a movement of rich peasants (*kulaks*), describing its ideas and slogans as counter-revolutionary, and condemning its activities as harmful to the Revolution. Direct threats addressed to the guides of the movement appeared in the papers as well as in the speeches and orders of the central authorities.

Soon the region was practically blockaded. In certain places, the Communist authorities established road barriers, and soon all the revolutionary militants going to Gulai-Polya or returning from it were arrested on the way; often they disappeared. In addition, the supplies of ammunition for the Insurrectionary Army were considerably reduced.

It was under the shadow of these new complications and threats that the Third Regional Congress of Peasants, Workers and Partisans met at Gulai-Polya on April 10th, 1919.

Its purpose was to fix precisely the immediate tasks ahead, and to consider the perspectives of revolutionary life in the region. The delegates of 72 districts, representing more than two million people, took part in the work of the congress. I regret that I have no transcript of the proceedings, for from this one would have been able to see clearly with what warmth and at the same time with what wisdom and clarity the people sought their own course in the Revolution and their own popular forms for the new life.

It was towards the end of this Third Congress that the drama which had been anticipated for some time began. A telegram from Dybenko, commander of the Bolshevik forces, arrived at the meeting place of the congress. It brutally declared the congress

"counter-revolutionary" and its organisers "outlaws". This was the first direct assault of the Bolsheviks on the freedom of the region, and it was at the same time a declaration of war against the Insurrectionary Army.

The congress understood perfectly its full significance. It voted immediately an indignant protest against the telegram, which was printed straight away and distributed among the peasants and workers.

Several days later, the Revolutionary Military Council drew up and sent to the Communist authorities, in the person of Dybenko, a detailed reply in which they emphasised the true part played by the region in the Revolution, and unmasked those who were really responsible for dragging it in a reactionary direction. This reply is lengthy, but we are taking the liberty of reproducing it in full, since it indicates admirably the respective positions of the two parties:

"'Comrade' Dybenko declares that the congress called at Gulai-Polya for the 10th April is *counter-revolutionary*, and puts its organisers outside the law. According to him, the severest repression should strike them. We quote his telegram verbatim: 'Novo-Alexeivka, No. 283, 10th April, at 2.45 p.m. Forward to Comrade Father Makhno,[1] General Staff of the Alexandrovsk Division . . . Any congress called in the name of the Revolutionary Military General Staff, which is now dissolved by my order, shall be considered manifestly counter-revolutionary, and its organisers will expose themselves to the severest repressive measures, to the extent of their being declared outlaws. I order that steps be taken immediately so that such steps may not be necessary. Signed: Dybenko, Division Commander.'

"Before declaring the congress counter-revolutionary, 'Comrade' Dybenko has not even taken the trouble to find out by whom and for what purpose this congress was called. Thus he says that it was called by the 'dissolved' Revolutionary Staff of Gulai-Polya, whereas in reality it was called by the executive committee of the Military Revolutionary Council.

[1]The nickname "Father Makhno" was given after the unification of the movement. The term "Father" (*Batko*) is frequently added to a name in the Ukraine, when a person is old or respected. It does not have any authoritarian significance.

"Consequently, having called the congress, the members of the Council do not know whether they have been declared outlaws, or whether the congress is considered counter-revolutionary by 'Comrade' Dybenko. If this is the case, permit us to explain to Your Excellency by whom and for what purpose this congress—in your opinion counter-revolutionary—was called. And then it might not seem so terrible as you represent it.

"As has already been said, it was called by the executive committee of the Military Revolutionary Council of the Gulai-Polya region, at Gulai-Polya itself. It was the Third Regional Congress called for the purpose of determining the future free conduct of the Military Revolutionary Council (you will see, 'Comrade' Dybenko, that three of these 'counter-revolutionary' congresses have taken place).

"A question now arises—where does the Military Revolutionary Council come from, and for what purpose was it created? If you do not already know that, 'Comrade' Dybenko, we are going to tell you. The Regional Military Revolutionary Council was formed following a resolution of the Second Congress which took place at Gulai-Polya on February 12th of this year (you see that it was a long time ago—you were not even here yet). The Council was created to organise the fighting men and proceed to a voluntary mobilisation, for the region was surrounded by Whites and the insurrectionary detachments composed of the first volunteers did not suffice to hold a very extended front.

"There were no Soviet troops in our region at that time. Furthermore, the population did not count very much on their intervention, considering that the defence of its region was its own duty. It is for this purpose that the Revolutionary Council was created. It was composed, following the resolution of the Second Congress, of a delegate from each district; in all, there were 32 members, each representing the districts of the departments of Ekaterinoslav and Tauride.

"We will give you later some more details of the Revolutionary Military Council. For the moment, the question arises: where did the Second Regional Congress come from? Who called it? Who authorised it? Were those who called it outlawed? And, if not, why not? The Second Regional Congress was in fact called at Gulai-Polya by an initiating group composed of five persons elected by the first Congress. This Second Congress took place on February 12th. And, to our great astonishment, the persons who called it were not outlawed. For, you see, there were not yet [in the region] any of those 'heroes' who dare to suppress the rights of the people, rights conquered with their own blood.

"Thus a new question arises. Where did the First Congress

come from? Who called it, etc.? 'Comrade' Dybenko, you are still, it seems, rather new in the revolutionary movement of the Ukraine, and we shall have to tell you about its very beginnings. That is what we are going to do. And after learning these facts, you will perhaps shift your sights a little.

"The First Regional Congress took place on January 23rd of this year in the insurrectionary camp at Great Mikhailovka. It was composed of delegates from the districts situated near the Denikin front. The Soviet troops were then far away, very far away. Our region was isolated from the whole world, on the one side by the Denikinists and on the other by the Petlurists. There were only the insurrectionary detachments with Father Makhno and Stchouss at their head, and these returned blow for blow with both the enemy armies. The organisations and social institutions in the various towns and villages did not at that time always bear the same names. In one town there was a Soviet, in another a Popular Office, in a third a Revolutionary Military Staff, in a fourth a Provincial Office, and so forth. But the spirit was equally revolutionary everywhere.

"The First Congress was organised to consolidate the front and create a certain uniformity of organisation and action in the whole region. No one called it—it met spontaneously, by the wish and with the approval of the people. At this Congress, the proposal was made to rescue from the Petlurist army our brothers who had been mobilised by force. To this end, a delegation composed of five persons was elected. It was given the task of presenting itself to Father Makhno's staff and to other staffs if need be, and of entering the army of the Ukrainian Directorate (Petlurist) in order to explain to our brothers that they had been fooled and that they should leave that army. In addition, the delegation was instructed, upon its return, to call a second, larger Congress, for the purpose of organising the whole region delivered from the counter-revolutionary bands and of creating a more powerful defence front.

"The delegates, on returning from their mission, therefore called the Second Regional Congress, outside of any 'party' or any 'power' or any 'law'. For you, 'Comrade' Dybenko, and the other lovers of laws like you, were then far away! And since the heroic guides of the insurgent movement did not want power over the people who had just broken with their own hands the chains of slavery, the Congress was not proclaimed counter-revolutionary and those who called it were not declared outlaws.

"Let us return to the Regional Council. At the time of the creation of the Revolutionary Military Council in the Gulai-Polya region, the Soviet Power appeared in our area. Following the resolution passed by the Second Congress, the Regional Council

did not drop its work on the appearance of the Soviet authorities. It had to carry out the instructions of the Congress. The Council was not an organ of command but an executive. It thus continued to work to the best of its ability and has always followed the revolutionary course in its work.

"Little by little, the Soviet authorities began to erect obstacles to the activity of the Council. The Commissars and other high functionaries of the Soviet government began to treat the Council as 'counter-revolutionary'. It was then that the members of the Council decided to call a third Regional Congress on April 10th at Gulai-Polya to determine the future conduct of the Council or to liquidate it if the Congress considered this necessary. And so the congress took place.

"They were not counter-revolutionaries who came to it, but men who were the first to raise the standard of the insurrection and the social revolution. They came to it to help co-ordinate the general fight of the region against all oppressors. The representatives of the seventy-two districts as well as those of several insurgent units participated in the Congress. All of them found that the Military Revolutionary Council was necessary; they even enlarged its executive committee and instructed the latter to carry out a voluntary and equalitarian mobilisation of the region.

"This Congress was somewhat astonished to receive 'Comrade' Dybenko's telegram declaring it 'counter-revolutionary', inasmuch as this region was the first to raise the standard of insurrection. That is why the Congress voted a lively protest against this telegram.

"Such are the facts, which should enlighten you, 'Comrade' Dybenko. Think! Have you the right—you alone—to declare counter-revolutionary a population of a million workers, a population which by itself, with its own calloused hands, threw off the chains of slavery and which is now in the process of building its own life according to its own will. No! If you are really a revolutionist, you will come to help it in its fight against the oppressors and in its work of building a new, free life.

"Can there exist laws made by people calling themselves revolutionists, which permit them to outlaw a whole people who are more revolutionary than they are themselves? For the executive committee of the Council represents the whole mass of the people.

"Is it permissible, is it admissible that they should come and establish laws of violence to subjugate a people who have just overthrown all lawmakers and all laws?

"Does there exist a law according to which a 'revolutionary' has the right to apply the most severe penalties to a revolutionary

mass, of which he calls himself the defender, simply because this mass has taken, without waiting for his permission, the good things which the revolutionist has promised them: freedom and equality?

"Should the mass of revolutionary people perhaps be silent when the 'revolutionist' takes away the freedom which they have just conquered?

"Do the laws of the Revolution order them to shoot a delegate because he believes he ought to carry out the mandate given him by the revolutionary mass which elected him?

"Whose interest should the revolution defend? Those of the party, or those of the people who set the revolution in motion with their blood?

"The Revolutionary Military Council of the Gulai-Polya region holds itself above all pressure, all influence of the parties; it only recognises the people who elected it. Its duty is to accomplish what the people have instructed it to do, and to create no obstacles to any Left Socialist party in the propagation of ideas. Consequently, if one day the Bolshevik idea succeeds among the workers, the Revolutionary Military Council—the 'manifestly counter-revolutionary' organisation—will be necessarily replaced by another organisation—'more revolutionary' and Bolshevik. But meanwhile, do not interfere with us, do not try to stifle us.

"If you and your like continue, 'Comrade' Dybenko, to carry on the same policy as before, if you believe it good and conscientious, then carry your dirty little business to its conclusion. Declare all the organisers of the Regional Congresses called when you and your party were at Kursk outlaws. Proclaim counter-revolutionary all those who first raised the standard of the insurrection, of the Social Revolution in the Ukraine, and who thus acted without waiting for your permission, without following your programme to the letter. Also declare all those who sent their delegates to the 'counter-revolutionary' congresses outlaws. Finally, outlaw all the vanished comrades who, without your permission, took part in the insurrectionary movements for the emancipation of the workers. Proclaim forever illegal and counter-revolutionary any Congress called without your permission. But know that truth will end by conquering force. Despite your threats, the Council did not relinquish its duties, because it has not the right to, and because it has no right to usurp the rights of the people.

The Revolutionary Military Council of the Gulai-Polya region.

Signed: Tchernoknijny, president; Kogan, vice-president; Kardbet, secretary; Koval, Petrenko, Dotzenko and other members of the council."

The reply of the Council maddened the Bolshevik authorities.

It proved to them that they had to abandon all hopes of peacefully subjugating the Ukraine to their dictatorship. And from this point on the Bolsheviks planned *an armed attack on the region.*

The newspaper campaign against *Makhnovitchina* redoubled in intensity. The worst vices, the most abominable crimes were imputed to the movement. The Red troops, the Communist Youth and the Soviet population in general were systematically aroused against the "Anarcho-bandits" and the *kulaks* in revolt. As earlier in Moscow and later in the Kronstadt revolt, Trotsky personally led a violent campaign against the free region. Having arrived in the Ukraine to take the forthcoming offensive in hand, he published a series of offensive articles, the most violent of which appeared in No. 51 of his paper *On the Road* under the title *Makhnovitchina.* According to Trotsky, the insurrectionary movement was only a camouflaged revolt of the rich peasants (*kulaks*) seeking to establish power in the region. All the talk of the Makhnovists and the Anarchists about the free workers' commune was merely a tactic of war, according to Trotsky. In reality, the Makhnovists and the Anarchists hoped to establish in the Ukraine their own "Anarchist Power" which would amount, in the last analysis, to "that of the rich peasants".

This was the same Trotsky who, a little later, made his famous pronouncement that it was necessary, before anything else, to get rid of Makhnovism. "It would be better", he explained, "to yield the whole Ukraine to Denikin, a frank counter-revolutionary, who could be easily compromised later by means of class propaganda, while the *Makhnovitchina* developed in the depths of the masses and aroused the masses themselves against us."

He made this proposal at the meetings of the commanders and the military leaders. And he thus proved, on one hand, that he was perfectly aware of the popular revolutionary nature of the Makhnovist movement and, on the other, that he was not at all aware of the real character of Denikin's movement.

At the same time, the Bolsheviks undertook a series of reconnoitering expeditions and investigations inside the region. High functionaries and rank-and-file militants—Kamenev, Antonoff-Ovselenko and others—visited Makhno and, in an apparently friendly way, made inquiries and criticisms; sometimes, however,

they went as far as insinuations and even undisguised threats.

The *putsch* of the Tsarist ex-officer Grigoriev—we will not discuss it in detail, although it presents a certain interest—which was liquidated by the Makhnovists in collaboration with the Bolsheviks, halted this campaign for a while. But it was soon resumed in all its vigour.

In May, 1919, the Bolsheviks tried to assassinate Makhno. The plot was foiled by Makhno himself, thanks to his usual strategy and also to a fortunate accident. Another accident and the promptness of his reaction permitted him to get his hands on the organisers of the plot. They were executed.

More than once, moreover, Makhno was warned by comrades employed in the Bolshevik institutions not to go to either Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov or anywhere else if he were called, since any official summons would be a trap where death would await him.

But the worst thing was that just at the moment when the "White danger" became serious, Denikin having received considerable reinforcements, precisely in the Makhnovist sector, through the arrival of a large body of Caucasians, the Bolsheviks completely stopped supplying the insurgents with munitions. All requests, all warnings, all protests were in vain. The Bolsheviks were firmly determined to blockade the Makhnovist sector in order to destroy, before anything else, the armed strength of the region. Their plan was very simple: to let Denikin wipe out the Makhnovists while preparing to throw out the former, subsequently, with their own forces.

As will be seen, they were seriously mistaken in their calculations, for they were not at all aware of Denikin's real strength or of his long-range plans. He was raising important contingents in the Caucasus, in the Don region, and in the Kuban, with the aim of a general campaign against the Revolution. Thrown back against the sea a few months previously, by the Makhnovist insurgents, Denikin undertook with great energy and care, the reorganising, arming and preparation of his troops. Before anything else, he had to destroy the Makhnovist army for the insurgents of Gulai-Polya constituted a permanent danger to his left wing. The Bolsheviks did not know anything about all this—or rather, they did not want to know anything about it, being

preoccupied with the struggle against Makhnovism.

At the end of May, 1919, having completed his preparations, Denikin started his second campaign whose scope and vigour surprised not only the Bolsheviks but even the Makhnovists. Thus, at the beginning of the month of June, the free region and the whole Ukraine was threatened on two sides at once; on the south-west by the powerful offensive of Denikin; from the north by the hostile attitude of the Bolsheviks, who, without the slightest doubt, were going to let Denikin wipe out the Makhnovists and were even going to make the job easier for him.

It was in these troubled conditions that the Revolutionary Military Council of Gulai-Polya, in view of the gravity of the situation, decided to call an extraordinary congress of peasants, workers, partisans, and Red soldiers of a number of regions in the departments of Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Kherson, Tauride and the Donetz basin.

This Fourth Regional Congress—dramatic in its very preparations—was called for June 15th. It was primarily to examine the general situation and means for averting the mortal danger hanging over the country both because of Denikin's advance and the inability of the Soviet authorities to realise what they were up against.

The Congress also had to consider the problem of the rationing of food among the population of the region, and, finally, that of local self-administration in general.

Here is the text of the call to this Congress which was issued by the Revolutionary Military Council to the workers of the Ukraine:

"Convocation of the Fourth Extraordinary Congress of Workers', Peasants' and Artisans' Delegates (Telegram No. 416).

"To all the Executive Committees of the districts, cantons, communes and villages of the departments of Ekaterinoslav, Taurid and neighbouring regions; to all the units of the 1st Insurrectionary Division of the Ukraine, known as Father Makhno's; to all the troops of the Red Army located in the same region!

"In its session of May 30, the Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Military Council, after having examined the

situation at the front created by the offensive of the White bands and also the situation in general—political and economic—of the Soviet power, reached the conclusion that only the working masses themselves could find a solution. That is why the Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Gulai-Polya region has decided to call an extraordinary Congress for June 15 at Gulai-Polya.

"Method of election: 1. The peasants and workers will send a delegate for each 3,000 toilers; 2. The insurgents and Red soldiers will delegate a representative from each unit of troops; 3. The staffs: that of Father Makhno's division, two delegates; the brigades, one delegate from each brigade staff; 4. The executive committees of the districts—those which recognise the Soviet as a base—will send one delegate for each organisation.

"Remarks: *a.* the elections of delegates of workers will take place at general assemblies of the villages, cantons, factories and workshops; *b.* the special meetings of the Soviets or the committees of the various units will not send delegates; *c.* since the Revolutionary Military Council does not have the necessary means, the delegates should be provided with food and money.

"Agenda: *a.* report of the Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Military Council and reports of the delegates; *b.* the existing situation; *c.* the role, tasks and aims of the Gulai-Polya region; *d.* reorganisation of the Revolutionary Military Council of the region; *e.* military organisation of the region; *f.* the problem of food supply; *g.* the agrarian problem; *h.* financial questions; *i.* union of the working peasants and the workers; *j.* public security; *k.* exercise of justice in the region; *l.* new business.

Done at Gulai-Polya, May 31, 1919."

As soon as this call was sent out, the Bolsheviks decided to attack the region of Gulai-Polya. While the insurgent troops were marching to their death, resisting the furious assault of Denikin's Cossacks, the Bolshevik regiments invaded the insurgent region from the north, striking the Makhnovists in the rear. Invading the villages, the Bolsheviks seized the militants and executed them on the spot; they destroyed the free communes and other local organisations.

It was Trotsky personally who ordered the attack. Could he tolerate an independent region a few steps away from "his State"? Could he repress his anger and hatred when he heard the frank language of a population which lived freely and which,

in their newspapers, spoke of him without fear or respect, as a simple State functionary; he, the great Trotsky, the superman as his acolytes in France and elsewhere still call him?

This man of limited qualities, but of immeasurable pride and malevolence, this good orator and polemicist, who had become—thanks to the miscarriage of the Revolution—the "infallible" military dictator of an immense country, this "demigod", could he tolerate as neighbours a free people, influenced and helped by the "Anarcho-bandits" whom he considered and treated as his personal enemies?

Yet any statesman, any Socialist pontiff, even if less pretentious and spiteful, would have acted as he did. We must not forget that he worked in perfect agreement with Lenin.

Unlimited pride and seething rage show in every line of the many orders that he issued against the Makhnovitchina. Here, first of all, is his famous Order No. 1824, which he issued in response to the call of the Revolutionary Military Council of Gulai-Polya.

"Order No. 1824 of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. Kharkov, June 4, 1919.

"To all Military Commissars. To all the Executive Commissars. To all the Executive Committees of the districts of Alexandrovsk, Mariupol, Berdiansk, Bakhmut, Pavlograd and Kherson.

"The Executive Committee of Gulai-Polya, with the collaboration of the staff of Makhno's brigade, is trying to call, for the 15th of this month, a congress of Soviets, and insurgents of the districts of Alexandrovsk, Mariupol, Bakhmut, Berdiansk, Melitopol and Pavlograd. This Congress is squarely directed against the Soviet Power in the Ukraine, and against the organisation of the southern front where Makhno's brigade is stationed.

"This Congress can have no result other than the exciting of some new, disgraceful revolt like that of Grigoriev, and the opening of the front to the Whites, before whom Makhno's brigade can only retreat incessantly, on account of the incompetence, criminal designs and treason of its leaders.

1. By the present order, this Congress is forbidden. In no case shall it take place.

2. All the peasant and working-class population shall be

warned, orally and in writing, that participation in the said Congress shall be considered an act of high treason against the Soviet Republic and the front.

3. All the delegates to the said Congress shall be arrested immediately and brought before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal of the 14th (formerly 2nd) Army of the Ukraine.

4. The persons who spread the call of Makhno and the executive committee of Gulai-Polya shall likewise be arrested.

5. The present order shall have the force of law as soon as it is telegraphed. It should be widely diffused, displayed in all public places and sent to the representatives of the Soviet authorities, to the commanders and commissars of the military units.

Signed: Trotsky, President of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic; Vatzetis, Commander in Chief; Araloff, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic; Kochkareff, Military Commissar of the Kharkov region."

"This document is truly classic," says Archinov. "Whoever studies the Russian Revolution should learn it by heart. It represents such a crying usurpation of the rights of the workers that it is pointless to insist further on this subject."

"Can there exist laws made by people calling themselves revolutionists, which permit them to outlaw a whole people who are more revolutionary than they are themselves?" Such was one of the questions asked by the revolutionary peasants, two months previously, in their famous reply to Dybenko. Article 2 of Trotsky's Order replies clearly that such laws can exist and that Order No. 1824 is the proof of it.

"*Does there exist a law*" asked the revolutionists of Gulai-Polya in the same document, "*according to which a 'revolutionist' has the right to impose the most severe penalties on the revolutionary mass of which he calls himself the defender, only because this mass has taken, without waiting for his permission, the good things that this revolutionist has promised them: Freedom and Equality?*" The same article 2 replies in the affirmative. The entire peasant and labouring population are declared guilty of high treason if they dare to participate in their own free congress.

"*Do the laws of the Revolution order the shooting of a delegate because he believes he ought to carry out the mandate*

given him by the revolutionary mass who elected him?" Trotsky's order (Articles 3 and 4) declares that not only delegates carrying out their mandates, but even those who have not yet begun to carry them out, should be arrested and "brought before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal," which we must emphasise was tantamount to a death sentence. Several young revolutionary peasants, Kostin, Polonin, Dobrolubov and others were brought before the military tribunal and shot, on the charge of having *discussed* the call of the Revolutionary Military Council of Gulai-Polya.

It is said that in posing their questions to Dybenko, the insurgents foresaw Trotsky's order No. 1824. Even if this were not the case, they showed great perspicacity in framing them.

Trotsky considered Makhno personally responsible for all that happened at Gulai-Polya. He did not even take the trouble to find out that Congress was called neither by the "staff of Makhno's brigade" not the executive committee of Gulai-Polya, but by an organ perfectly independent of the two: the Revolutionary Military Council of the region.

It is significant that in this order Trotsky already harped on the "treachery of the Makhnovist leaders" whom he accused of "retreating incessantly before the Whites." He forgot to add that he himself had ordered on the very eve of Denikin's advance that no more munitions be supplied to Makhno's brigade. This was a tactic. It was also a signal. A few days later, Trotsky and the whole Communist press expatiated on the pretended "opening of the front" to Denikin's troops. And Order No. 1824 was followed by numerous others in which Trotsky commanded the army and the Red authorities to destroy Makhnovism by every method and at its very source. Moreover, he gave secret orders to capture at any cost not only Makhno and the members of his staff, but even the peaceful militants who were only carrying on purely educational activity in the movement. The instructions were to bring them all before the Council of War and execute them.

Trotsky knew that the front against Denikin had been formed only because of the efforts and sacrifices of the insurgent peasants themselves. This front arose at a particularly stirring moment of their revolt—when the region was free from all forms of authority. It was established in the south-east, as the sentinel for the freedom

they had won. For more than six months, the revolutionary insurgents maintained an unbreakable barrier to the most vigorous assaults of the monarchist counter-revolution. They sacrificed several thousand men there. They placed all their resources at the disposal of the cause and prepared to defend their freedom to the end.

Yes, Trotsky knew all that. But he needed a formal justification for his campaign against the revolutionary people of the Ukraine. And it was with monstrous cynicism, with unimaginable insolence and hypocrisy that he let this front collapse, depriving it of arms and ammunition, taking away all means of organisation, so as to be able to accuse the insurgents of having betrayed the revolution and opened the way for Denikin's troops.[1]

The Fourth Regional Congress, projected for June 15th, could not take place. Well before that, the Bolsheviks and the Denikinists were already active in the region.

In the areas where they were already established, or in neighbouring districts which they invaded, the Bolsheviks set about carrying out Trotsky's orders. At Alexandrovsk, for instance, all the workers' meetings planned for the purpose of discussing the call of the Council and the agenda of the Congress were forbidden under pain of death. Those which were organised in ignorance of the order were dispersed by armed force. In other cities and towns, the Bolsheviks acted in the same way. As for the peasants in the villages, they were treated with still less ceremony; in many places militants, and even peasants "suspected of acting in favour of the insurgents and the Congress" were seized and executed after a semblance of a trial. Many peasants carrying the call were arrested, "tried" and shot, before they could even find out about

[1]Later, in Spain (1936-9) the Communists employed the same tactics. A case is known to me in all its details. Below Teruel, a Communist brigade held the front against Franco, alongside an Anarchist brigade of about 1,500 men. To permit the destruction of the latter, the Communists withdrew secretly and voluntarily during the night. The next morning, the Fascists advanced into the breach and encircled the Anarchist brigade. Of the 1,500 men, only 500 were able to escape, beating a passage through with grenades and revolvers. The other 1,000 fighters were massacred. The next day the Communists accused the Anarchists of treachery and of opening the front to Franco!

Order No. 1824.

Neither Makhno himself nor his staff received any communication about this order. The Bolsheviks wanted to avoid alarming them too soon, in the hope of catching them by surprise, and it was only by chance that they heard of the order, three days after its publication. Makhno reacted immediately. He sent a telegram to the Bolshevik authorities in which he declared that he wanted, by reason of the situation that existed, to give up his post as commander. They sent him no answer.

WE HAVE NOW reached the first of a series of exceptionally dramatic turns in the Makhnovist epic, a turn which subjected Makhno himself, the commanders of the various units of his army, the insurgents as a whole, and even the whole population of the free region, to a very severe test. If this situation was resolved to everybody's credit, it was largely due to the exceptional qualities, the extreme valour and the remarkable self-discipline of all who participated in it.

Some days before the publication of Trotsky's order No. 1824, Makhno discovered that the Bolsheviks had weakened the front in the Grichino sector and that they were thus offering Denikin's troops free access by the north-east flank into the Gulai-Polya region. He informed the staff and the Council directly.

In fact, hordes of Cossacks had over-run the region, not through the Insurrectionary front, but to its left, where the Red troops were stationed. The situation became tragic. The Makhnovist army, which held the front on the Mariupol-Kuteinikovo-Taganrog line, was bypassed by Denikin's troops which, in enormous masses, invaded the very heart of the region.

Since the month of April, the peasants of the whole country had vainly sent great numbers of volunteers to Gulai-Polya. There was nothing with which to arm them, since, as we have seen, the Bolsheviks, contrary to their promises and the agreement they concluded, had cut off all supplies to the insurgents and thus sabotaged the defence of the region. With rage in their hearts, the Makhnovist staff were obliged to send the volunteers home. The advance of the Denikinists was the inevitable result.

"In a single day," Archinov records, "the peasants of Gulai-Polya formed a regiment to try and save their village. They armed themselves with axes, picks, old carbines, shot guns, and set out to meet the Whites, seeking to dampen their spirits. About 15 kilometres from Gulai-Polya, near the village of Sviatodukhova, they encountered a considerable number of Don and Kuban Cossacks. The Gulai-Polyans engaged in a heroic and murderous battle with them, and were nearly all killed, including their commander, B. Veretelnikoff, a worker from the Putilov Works in Petrograd, who had originally come from Gulai-Polya. Then a regular avalanche of Cossacks fell upon Gulai-Polya, and occupied it on June 6th, 1919. Makhno, with his staff and a detachment of troops, with only one battery, retreated to the railway station, situated about seven kilometres from the village, but in the evening he was forced to abandon the station as well. Having regrouped during the night all the forces he could still muster, Makhno vigorously counter-attacked next morning, and succeeded in dislodging the enemy from Gulai-Polya. But he only remained master of the village a short while, and Denikinist reserves coming to the rescue of their forces, obliged him to abandon it completely."

Although in this way they had opened the front to the Whites and given confidential orders directed against the Makhnovists, the Bolsheviks continued to feign friendship towards the insurgents, as though nothing in the situation had changed. This was a manoeuvre to capture the guides of the movement, and especially Makhno. On June 7th, two days after sending the local authorities the telegram containing Order No. 1824, the Bolshevik supreme commander sent Makhno an armoured train, bade him resist "to the end", and promised him other reinforcements. In fact, two days later, several detachments of Red Army troops arrived at the station of Gaichur, near Tchaplino, twenty kilometres from Gulai-Polya.

The commander-in-chief, Voroshilov (the future People's Commissar for War), the Commissar of the Armies, Mejlauk, and other high Communist functionaries arrived with these detachments. Close contact was established, in appearance, between the Red command and that of the insurgents. A kind of joint staff was created, and Mejlauk and Voroshilov invited Makhno to move on to their armoured train, in order, they said, to direct operations jointly.

All this was only a cynical comedy. At that very moment

Voroshilov had in his pocket an order signed by Trotsky, commanding him to capture Makhno and all the other responsible leaders of the movement, to disarm the insurgent troops and to shoot without quarter all those who attempted the least resistance. Voroshilov was only awaiting a propitious moment to carry out this order.

Faithful friends warned Makhno in time of the danger which he was running personally and which threatened his whole army and the revolutionary movement. His situation became increasingly difficult. On the one hand, he wanted to avert at all costs the bloody struggle [between the Makhnovists and the Bolsheviks] which it appeared would develop in the face of the enemy. But, on the other hand, he could not sacrifice without a struggle his comrades, his armed forces and his whole cause.

He found a satisfactory solution. Weighing everything, he came to two important decisions. 1. He resolved to abandon, for the moment, the post of commander of the Insurrectionary Army. 2. He decided to ask all the units of his army to remain where they were and accept—temporarily—the Red command, while they waited for the propitious moment to resume the struggle for emancipation.

Two days later, with extraordinary coolness and skill, he carried out this double manoeuvre. He quietly left Voroshilov and Mejlauk, and declared to his staff that, for the time being, his work as a simple fighter in the ranks would be more useful. To the Soviet High Command he sent the following statement:

"To the Staff of the 14th Army, Voroshilov to Trotsky, President of the Revolutionary Military Council, Kharkov, to Lenin and Kemenev, Moscow.

"As a result of Order No. 1824 of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, I sent the staff of the 2nd Army, and Trotsky, a telegram requesting that I be relieved of the post I now occupy. I repeat my request. Here are the reasons which I believe should justify it. Although I have made war, with the insurgents, against the White bands of Denikin, preaching nothing to the people other than the love of freedom and free action, the whole official Soviet press, as well as that of the Communist-Bolshevik Party, has spread rumours about me which are unworthy of a revolutionist. They wish to make me seem a bandit, an

accomplice of Grigoriev, a conspirator against the Soviet Republic for the purpose of re-establishing capitalism. Thus, in an article entitled *Makhnovism* (*On the Road*, No. 51), Trotsky poses the question: 'Against whom did the Makhnovist insurgents arise?' and all through his article he occupies himself with demonstrating that Makhnovism is nothing but a battle front against the power of the Soviets. He does not say a word about the real front against the Whites, more than a hundred kilometres long, where the insurgents have been suffering enormous losses for the last six months.

"Order No. 1824 calls me 'a conspirator against the Soviet Republic' and the 'organiser of a rebellion like Grigoriev.' I consider it an inviolable right of the workers and peasants—a right conquered by the Revolution—to call Congresses on their own account to discuss their affairs. That is why the prohibition by the central authorities of the calling of such Congresses, and the declaration proclaiming them illegal (Order 1824) represent a direct and insolent violation of the rights of the working masses.

"I understand perfectly the attitude of the central authorities with regard to me. I am absolutely convinced that these authorities consider the Insurrectionary movement incompatible with their Statist activity. At the same time, they believe that this movement is closely tied to me personally and they honour me with all the resentment and hatred they feel for the whole Insurrectionary movement. Nothing could demonstrate this better than the article by Trotsky mentioned above, in which, deliberately accumulating lies and slanders, he gives evidence of personal animosity towards me.

"This hostile attitude—which now becomes aggressive—of the central authorities towards the Insurrectionary movement leads unavoidably to the creation of a special internal front, on both sides of which are the working masses who have faith in the Revolution. I consider this eventuality an immense, unpardonable crime against the workers, and I believe it my duty to do what I can to avert it.

"The most effective means of preventing the central authorities from committing this crime is, in my opinion, evident. I must leave the post I occupy. I presume that, having done this, I and the revolutionary insurgents will cease to be suspected of engaging in anti-Soviet conspiracies by the central authorities, and the latter will come to consider the insurrection in the Ukraine an important phenomenon, a living, active manifestation of the social revolution of the masses, and not a hostile movement with which they can only have, as they have shown up to now, relations of mistrust and deception going as far as unworthily bargaining for every case

of munitions and even sometimes sabotaging supplies, which has cost the insurgents innumerable losses in men and territory won by the Revolution, losses which would easily have been avoided if the central authorities had adopted another attitude.

"I request that someone come to take over my post.
Gaichur Station, June 9th, 1919. Signed: Batko Makhno."

On receipt of Makhno's statement, the Bolsheviks, supposing him still at Gaichur, sent men with orders not to take over his post, but to seize him. At the same moment, they treacherously captured the chief of staff of the Insurrectionary Army, Oseroff, the staff members Mikhaleff-Pavlenko and Burbyga, and several members of the Revolutionary Military Council. All these men were put to death on the spot. This was the signal for many other executions of Makhnovists who had fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

But Makhno himself escaped. Having adroitly disengaged himself from the tentacles with which the Bolsheviks enveloped Gaichur, he arrived unexpectedly among his troops at Alexandrovsk. He knew from the friends who had warned him of his predicament that the Bolsheviks, believing him to be at Gaichur, had named his successor at Alexandrovsk.

There, without losing an instant, he officially turned over the affairs of the division and his command to this new chief, who, having just been assigned, had not yet received any orders concerning Makhno personally. "He did this," says Archinov, "because he desired to leave his post openly and honestly, so that the Bolsheviks could have no pretext for accusing him of anything with regard to the affairs of the division he commanded. He wished to play prudently."

After this transfer of command, he addressed to the Insurrectionary Army an explanatory proclamation in which he described the new situation. He declared that he had to leave his post of commander *for the time being*, and called on the insurgents to fight with the same energy against Denikin's troops, without being disturbed by the fact that they would temporarily be under the command of the Bolshevik staff.

The insurgents understood. Nearly all their units remained where they were, declaring that they recognised the Red commander

and accepted their incorporation into the Bolshevik army.

The Bolsheviks believed they had triumphed. But they did not know that at the same time—in agreement with Makhno—several of the more devoted regimental commanders of the insurgents had met secretly and taken a solemn oath to wait for the propitious moment to return again under Makhno's command, so long as this act did not put the external front in danger. No word of this decision leaked out.

After doing all this, Makhno, accompanied by a small detachment of cavalry, disappeared. Meanwhile the insurgent regiments, transformed into Red units and remaining under their regular commanders—Kalachnikoff, Kurilenko, Budanoff, Klein, Dermendji and others—continued to hold off Denikin's troops, preventing them from taking Alexandrovsk and Ekaterinoslav.

AS WE HAVE SAID, the Bolshevik leaders were not aware of the true proportions of Denikin's undertaking. Only a few days before the fall of Ekaterinoslav and Kharkov, Trotsky declared that Denikin did not represent a serious threat, and that the Ukraine was not at all in danger. He had to change his views the next day, when he realised that Kharkov was seriously threatened. It was high time [that he should come to his senses]. Ekaterinoslav succumbed at the end of June, and Kharkov fell into Denikin's hands two weeks later.

The Bolshevik authorities did not try to regain the offensive or even to organise a defence; they were only concerned with evacuating the Ukraine. Nearly all the Red troops were involved in this operation; they retreated to the north, taking with them as many men and as much rolling stock as possible. Clearly, they were abandoning the Ukraine to its fate; they were delivering it whole to the reactionaries.

It was now that Makhno considered that the opportune moment had come to regain the initiative in the struggle and to act again as guide to an independent revolutionary force. This time, he was obliged to act against both Denikin and the Bolsheviks.

The insurgent detachments who had remained provisionally under Bolshevik command received the instruction they had been

patiently awaiting, to remove their Bolshevik superiors, leave the Red Army, and regroup themselves under Makhno's command. Yet even before they could carry out this instruction and rejoin their guide, a new insurrectionary army had formed around Makhno.

The new situation recalled the events following the Austro-German invasion. As we have said, the attitude of the Denikinists and their masters, the former lords who returned with the army, was insolent and brutal in the extreme towards the working population. As soon as they were re-established, these gentlemen set about restoring the feudal absolutist régime. A pitiless "White terror" of terrible reprisals descended on the villages and cities of the Ukraine.

The reply was not long in coming. In great numbers the peasants fled from the reaction and sought out Makhno, whom they naturally considered the man capable of taking up the struggle against the new oppressors.

In less than two weeks, a new army was formed under his direction. The arms they possessed were inadequate, but at this moment the "basic" regiments which had left the Red Army began to arrive. They appeared one after another, not only full of vigour, enthusiasm and fighting spirit, but also well supplied with arms and ammunition. For in leaving the Red Army they had carried off all the arms they could get hold of. The retreating Bolshevik command, which was taken unawares and feared mutiny among its own troops could not oppose this audacious act. [In addition to the returning Anarchist battalions], several Red regiments made common cause with the Makhnovists and enlarged the ranks of the Insurrectionary Army.

With these new troops, Makhno first attempted to halt [the advance of] Denikin's divisions. He retreated step by step, seeking to orient himself in his new surroundings and to take advantage of the first favourable opportunity to resume the offensive. But the Denikinists were on their guard. They had not forgotten the losses and defeats which the Makhnovists had caused them during the preceding winter. Their command assigned a whole army corps—several regiments of cavalry, infantry and artillery—to fight the insurgents.

While retreating slowly before the superior forces of the enemy, the Insurrectionary Army gradually took on a strange appearance. Irritated by the revival of stubborn resistance on the part of the Makhnovists—a resistance that impeded and seriously delayed his advance—Denikin not only made war on the army as such, but also on the whole peasant population. In addition to the usual persecutions and beatings, the villages he occupied were burnt and wrecked. The greater part of the peasants' dwellings were looted and then destroyed. Hundreds of peasants were shot. The women were maltreated, and nearly all the Jewish women, who were fairly numerous in the Ukrainian villages, were raped, notably at Gulai-Polya.

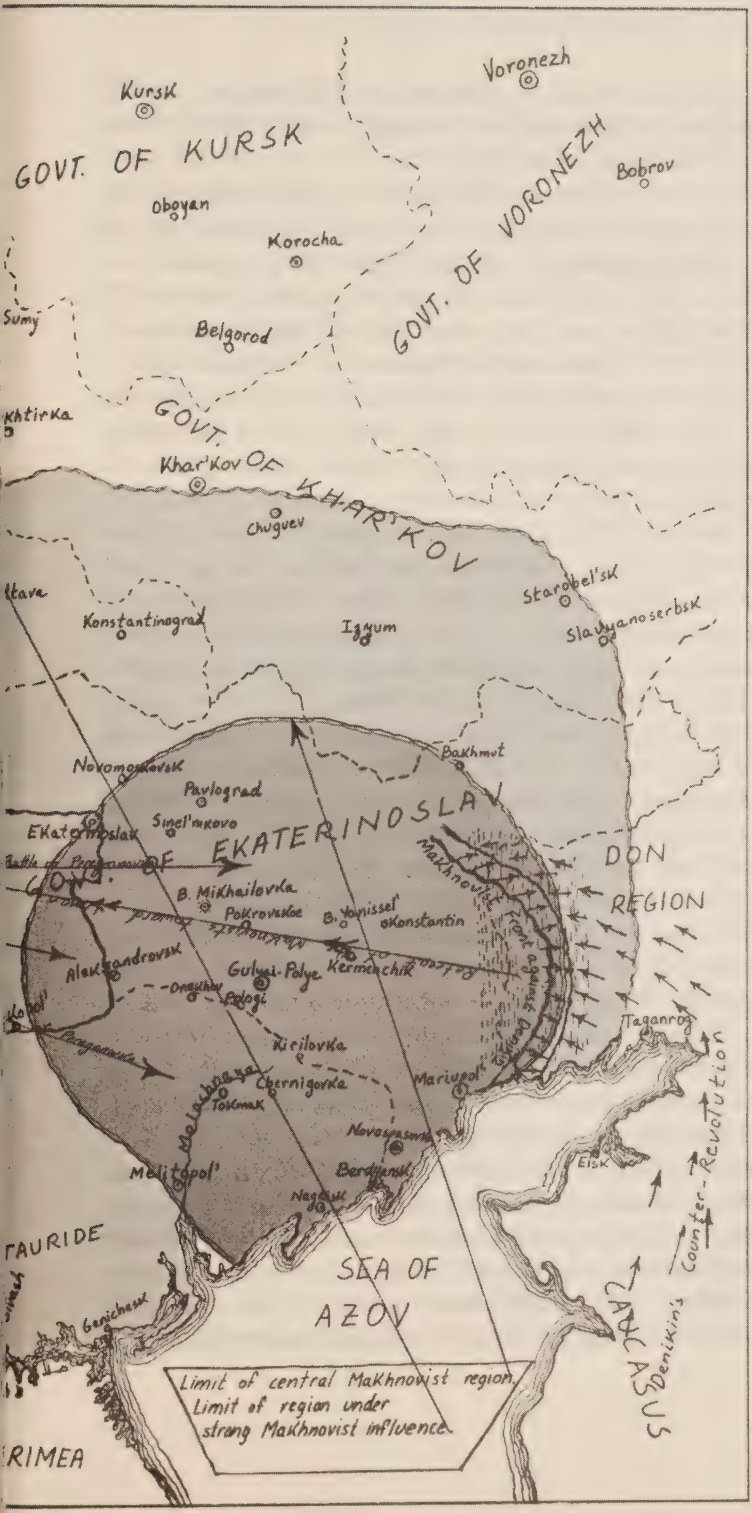
This kind of warfare obliged the inhabitants of the villages threatened by the approach of the Denikinists to abandon their hearths and flee. Thus the Makhnovist army was joined and followed in its retreat by thousands of peasant families in flight from their homes with their livestock and belongings. It was a veritable migration. An enormous mass of men, women and children trailed after the army in its slow retreat towards the west, a retreat which gradually extended over hundreds of kilometres.

Arriving at Makhno's army at the beginning of its withdrawal, I saw this picturesque "kingdom on wheels", as it was later called, and followed its fantastic movements. The summer of 1919 was exceptionally dry in the Ukraine. Over the dusty roads and the neighbouring fields this human sea moved slowly, with thousands of cattle, with wagons of every kind, with its own food supply, administration and health service. It became a virtual supply train for the army.

But the army did not allow its movements to be influenced by this mass of fugitives. It kept strictly to its course, except for the units which went off to protect the main body; the cavalry, in particular, were almost always away fighting.

The infantry, when it was not fighting, led the march of the army. [As I have already said], it was carried in *tatchankas*. Each of these vehicles, which were drawn by two horses, carried the driver on the front seat and two soldiers behind them. In some sections a machine gun was installed on the seat between them. The artillery brought up the rear. A huge black flag

MAP OF THE MAKHNOVIST REGION AND MOVEMENT
drawn by Arshinov
Chernigov
GOVT. OF CHERNIGOV
Konotop
Nezhin
Romny
DNIEPER RIVER
Kiev
Vasil'Kov
GOVT. OF POLTAVA
Mirgorod
GOVT. OF KIEV
Belaya Tser'Kov
Cherkassy
Disposition of Makhnovist and Denikinist troops on the eve of the Battle of Peregonovka
sept. 25, 1919.
DENIKINISTS
MAKHNOVISTS
Uman
Peregonovka
Kremenchug
Znamenka
Aleksandriya
Elisavetgrad
Golta
Balta
Krivoi-Rog
Voznesensk
GOVT. OF KHERSON
Nikolaev
Kherson
GOVT. OF
Odessa
BESSARABIA
Akkerman
BLACK SEA
SCALE
66⅔ Versts.


Kursk
Voronezh
GOVT. OF KURSK
GOVT. OF VORONEZH
Bobrov
Oboyan
Korocha
Sumy
Belgorod
GOVT. OF KHAR'KOV
Khar'kov
Chuguev
Starobel'sk
Slavyanoserbsk
Konstantinograd
Izyum
Bakhmut
Novomoskovsk
Pavlograd
Sinel'nikovo
Ekaterinoslav
GOVT. OF EKATERINOSLAV
DON REGION
B. Mikhailovka
Pokrovskoe
B. Yanissel'
Konstantin
Makhnovist front against Denikin
Aleksandrovsk
Gulyai-Polye
Kermenchik
Pologi
Taganrog
Kirilovka
Mariupol'
Chernigovka
Tokmak
Novospasovka
Melitopol'
Berdyansk
Eisk
Nagaisk
TAURIDE
SEA OF AZOV
Genichesk
CAUCASUS
Denikin's Counter-Revolution
Limit of central Makhnovist region.
Limit of region under strong Makhnovist influence.
RIMEA

floated over the first carriage. The slogans "Liberty or Death" and "The Land to the Peasants, the Factories to the Workers" were embroidered in silver on its two sides.

Despite the circumstances under which they lived, despite the constant danger and the almost daily combats, all these people were full of spirit and courage. Each of them felt responsible for all, and all for each. Every now and then a popular or a revolutionary song would ring out from some part of the line, and soon it would be taken up by thousands of voices. Arriving at a village, this mass of fugitives would camp until the order came to take the road again. Then, without waiting, they would resume the march, always towards the west, always to the echo of battles that took place all around them.

In the course of this retreat, which lasted for four months, thousands of these refugees left the army, set out on their own and dispersed over the entire Ukraine. Most of them lost their homes and possessions for ever. Some, indeed, managed to establish new homes, but many lost their lives, through exhaustion, sickness, or falling into the hands of the Whites.

At first the insurgent army tried to dig in on the Dnieper near the city of Alexandrovsk. For some time it remained master of the famous Kitchkass bridge (one of the most important in Russia). But it was soon overwhelmed by the greatly superior numbers of the enemy, and had to abandon the river, retreating first towards Dolinskaia, and later towards the city of Elizabethgrad.

Meanwhile, the few Red troops who remained here and there in the Ukraine and in the Crimea were completely demoralised by the attitude of the Bolshevik command, and lost all military significance. They considered the flight of the Communist authorities from the Ukraine to be a defection from the revolutionary cause. For these men, who were stagnating in inactivity and doubt, Makhno was the only revolutionary hope in the country. Finally, in July, nearly all the Red regiments in the Crimea mutinied, deposed their commanders and set out to join Makhno's army. This action was deliberately prepared and carried out by Makhnovists who had remained provisionally in the ranks of the Red army and now departed, taking with them nearly all the Bolshevik troops. By forced march, carrying their former commanders with

them as prisoners, and bearing a large quantity of arms and ammunition, these numerous and fresh regiments, who were well organised and full of enthusiasm after their revolt, advanced in search of Makhno. Their defection was a blow to the Bolsheviks, for it reduced to almost nothing their forces in the Ukraine.

The meeting took place at the beginning of August, at Dobrovelitchkovka, an important village in the department of Kherson. Makhno's army, as a result of this action, became powerful again. From now on it was possible to envisage military action on a large scale. It was even possible to look towards victory.

Soon afterwards Makhno halted his retreat. He did so primarily in order to regroup his forces, for which volunteers were coming from all sides. Having set pickets all around the occupied territory, which lay between Pomostchnaia, Elizabethgrad and Voznessensk—he proceeded to a complete reorganisation of his army: It now numbered about 20,000 combatants. They were divided into four brigades of infantry and cavalry, a division of artillery and a regiment of machine-gunners.

The cavalry, which was commanded by Stchuss, numbered between two and three thousand sabres. The machine-gun regiment had about five hundred guns. The artillery was adequate. A squadron of 150 to 200 horsemen was formed into a special unit which would always accompany Makhno in his travels, his raids and various other military actions.

Once the regrouping was completed, Makhno began a vigorous offensive against Denikin's troops. The fighting was extremely fierce, and the Denikinist army was repeatedly thrown back many kilometres to the east. But very soon the Makhnovists began to run out of ammunition, so that two attacks out of three were only to capture supplies. Moreover, Denikin sent great numbers of fresh reserves into battle. He wanted to wipe out the Insurrectionary Army at all costs, so as to be able to march on Moscow in complete security. As a further complication of their misfortunes, the Makhnovists had to face at the same time some Bolshevik troops who were coming up from Odessa and the Crimea, forcing a passage across the Ukraine to the north.

Finally the situation became untenable and Makhno was

forced to abandon the Pomostchnaia-Elizabethgrad-Voznessensk region and retreat towards the west. Thus began his famous withdrawal over a line of more than six hundred kilometres, into the territory of the department of Kiev, a withdrawal which lasted almost two months, from August to the end of September, 1919.

Denikin's manifest plan was to encircle the Makhnovist army and to annihilate it. He sent against it several of his best regiments, some of which were composed entirely of young officers who particularly hated the "mujik rabble". Among them, the 1st Simferopol and the 2nd Labinsky regiments had distinguished themselves everywhere by their bravery, their combativeness and their furious energy.

Fierce fighting, of an unprecedented violence, took place almost every day; in fact, it was an uninterrupted battle which lasted for two months, and in which both sides fought exceptionally hard.

I was with Makhno's army during this whole retreat (five comrades, including Archinov and myself, constituting the Commission for Propaganda and Education) and I recall this long series of days as if it were an interminable nightmare.

Those summer nights, which only lasted a few hours, hardly allowing a brief rest to the men and horses, vanishing suddenly with the first glimmer of daylight, the rattle of machine guns, the explosion of shells and the gallop of horses! It was the Denikinists who, attacking from all sides, sought once again to enclose the insurgents in a vice of iron and fire.

Every day they began this manoeuvre again, pressing Makhno's troops always closer together, drawing their circle always tighter, leaving the insurgents less and less space in which to move.

Every day savage combats, going as far as atrocious hand-to-hand fighting, took place on the front and on the flanks of the Makhnovist army, and did not end until nightfall. And every night the army found itself forced to retreat, barely escaping through an increasingly narrow passage, so as not to let the Denikinist vice close on it completely. And at sunrise, it had once more to face the implacable enemy which again sought to encircle it.

The insurgents lacked clothing, shoes and sometimes also

food. Through torrid heat, under a leaden sky, and a hail of bullets and shells, they went further and further away from their own country toward an unknown destination and fate.

At the end of the month of August, Denikin's army corps, which already weighed so heavily on Makhno, was reinforced by new troops from near Odessa and Voznessensk, Denikin, who with the bulk of his forces was already marching on Orel (not far from Moscow), driving back the Red Army, wanted to get rid of the Makhnovists as quickly as possible. For as long as they existed in his rear, he could not feel secure.

The situation got worse and worse every day. But Makhno did not despair. For the moment, he imperturbably continued his skilful retreat. And the fighting men, animated by their ideal, conscious of their task, knowing that they fought for their own cause, every day accomplished veritable miracles of courage and resistance.

It was finally decided to abandon the vicinity of the railroads by which the retreat had up to then been carried out. [Before doing this the insurgents] blew up the armoured trains recently sent to the Denikinists, one of which, the more powerful, was the famous "Invincible".

The retreat continued by country roads, from village to village, and became more and more difficult for the panting, exhausted fugitives. Yet not for an instant did the insurgents lose courage. They all retained hope of triumphing over the enemy. They all valiantly endured the rigours of the situation. With inexhaustible patience, their will stretched to the limit, they rallied under the continued and terrible fire of the enemy around their beloved guide and comrade, [Makhno].

And as for him, on his feet day and night, scarcely interrupting his main activity by a few hours sleep, covered with dust and sweat, but indefatigable, constantly surveying the front, keeping an eye on everything, encouraging the fighters, and often throwing himself furiously into the battle, he thought only of the moment when, taking advantage of some mistake on the enemy's part, he could strike a decisive blow against them.

He watched with a piercing eye all the movements, all the acts

of the Denikinists. He incessantly sent out reconnaissance patrols in every direction. Exact reports were brought to him at every hour. For he knew only too well that the slightest error of command on his part could be fatal to the entire army and hence to his whole cause. He also knew that the more Denikin's troops advanced to the north, the more vulnerable they became in their rear, by reason of the great extension of the front. He took stock of this circumstance and awaited his hour.

Towards mid-September the Insurrectionary Army reached the city of Uman in the department of Kiev. They found it in the hands of the Petlurists. Petlura was in a state of war with Denikin. In his march on Moscow, the latter was neglecting the western Ukraine, expecting to take it easily after the defeat of the Bolsheviks.

What would be the attitude of the Petlurists towards the Makhnovists? And how should the latter act? Should they attack the Petlurists? Should they ask for free passage across their territory and through the city, without which it was impossible to continue the retreat? Should they propose that they fight the Denikinists side by side with the Makhnovists? Or should they simply propose that the Petlurists remain neutral and take the best possible advantage of the situation later on? Everything considered, the last solution seemed the most sensible.

We should mention that the Insurrectionary Army had about 8,000 wounded. In the circumstances these men were deprived of all medical aid. Moreover, they comprised an enormous train in the rear of the army, which seriously hindered its movements and its military operations. The staff intended to ask the Uman authorities to take at least the most seriously wounded into the city hospitals for treatment.

By a fortunate coincidence, at the very moment when these problems were being discussed in the insurgent camp, a Petlurist delegation arrived and declared that, since they were at war with Denikin, they desired to avoid the formation of a new front by opening hostilities with the Makhnovists. This corresponded perfectly with the latter's desires, and a pact was concluded between the two parties, according to which they agreed to maintain a strict military neutrality towards each other. Furthermore, the

Petlurists consented to take the wounded Makhnovists into their hospitals.

The pact stipulated that this strictly military neutrality, which applied only to the immediate situation, did not impose on either party any political or ideological restrictions. Since I was a participant in the parleys, I expressly emphasise the importance of this clause. The Makhnovists knew that the mass of the Petlurists had a great deal of sympathy for them and would listen to their propaganda. It was therefore a question of having the freedom to carry it on without interference, and the Makhnovists published a pamphlet entitled *Who is Petlura?*, in which the latter was unmasked as a defender of the privileged classes and an enemy of the workers.

As for the Petlurist authorities, while they were resolute enemies of the Makhnovists, they had many reasons for preserving an attitude of extreme prudence towards them. Nevertheless, the insurgents knew that the Petlurist "neutrality" was purely superficial, and that the latter might very well unite secretly with the Denikinists to wipe out the Makhnovists. It was, however, a question of the Insurrectionary Army gaining a few days' respite, of getting rid of their wounded, of averting an immediate attack from the rear, in order not to be caught unawares in a trap. All these goals were attained. But, on the other hand, the suspicions of the Makhnovists soon received striking confirmation.

According to the "neutrality" pact, the Insurrectionary Army had the right to occupy a territory of ten square kilometres near the village of Tekutcha in the vicinity of Uman. Petlura's forces were dispersed to the north and west, Denikin's to the east and south, around Golta. But a few days after the conclusion of the pact the Makhnovists were informed by sympathisers that parleys were being held between the Petlurists and the Denikinists to work out a plan for co-operating to surround and exterminate the Insurrectionary Army. And indeed, a few days later, on the night of September 24th, the Makhnovist scouts reported that four or five Denikinist regiments were in their rear in the west. They could only have got there by passing through the territory occupied by the Petlurists, with the help or at least the acquiescence of the latter. On the evening of September 25th, the Makhnovists were

completely surrounded by Denikin's troops. The bulk of his forces remained concentrated to the east, but a strong barrier was established behind the Makhnovists, and the city of Uman was in the hands of the Denikinists, who were already seeking out and killing the wounded who had been distributed among the hospitals and in private homes.

An order issued by the Denikinist command, which found its way to the Makhnovist staff, read as follows: "Makhno's bands are surrounded. They are completely demoralised, disorganised, starving and without ammunition. I order that they be attacked and destroyed within three days." It bore the signature of General Slastchoff, commander-in-chief of the Denikinist forces in the Ukraine (he later went over to the Bolsheviks).

All retreat was now impossible for the insurgent troops, and the moment for the decisive battle had come. The fate of the whole Insurrectionary Army, the whole movement, the whole cause depended on this supreme battle.

And at this moment Makhno declared with the greatest simplicity that the retreat up to that day had only been a forced strategy, that the real war was about to begin, not later than the next day, September 26th. He made all the necessary preparations for this last fight, and immediately commenced his first manoeuvres.

On the evening of September 25th, the Makhnovists, who up to then had been marching west, suddenly changed direction and began moving east, towards the bulk of the Denikinist army. The first encounter occurred late in the evening, near the village of Krutenkoi. The Makhnovist First Brigade attacked Denikin's advance guard there, the latter retreated to take up better positions and draw the enemy after them towards the bulk of the army. But the Makhnovists did not pursue them.

As Makhno had hoped, this manoeuvre fooled the enemy, who considered the attack a reconnaissance or a diversion, and gained the impression that the march of the insurgents still lay towards the west. He made ready to get behind them at Uman and to wipe them out in the trap that had been prepared. He did not for an instant expect that the Insurrectionary Army would dare to attack his main force, and he did not prepare for the possibility of a frontal attack.

But this was precisely Makhno's plan. His reasoning was very simple. To break through the enemy lines represented the only chance of safety for the army, and it was therefore necessary to try it, to throw themselves against Denikin's forces to the east, in the hope of wiping them out. The manoeuvre of the day before had been merely to distract the enemy.

In the middle of the night of September 26th, all the Makhnovist forces started marching east. The main enemy forces were concentrated near the village of Peregonovska, which was occupied by the Makhnovists. (Here is Peter Archinov's description of the battle which now took place):

"The fighting started between 3 and 4 a.m. It kept mounting in intensity, and reached its peak by 8 a.m., in a regular hurricane of machine-gun fire on both sides. Makhno himself, with his cavalry escort, had disappeared at nightfall, seeking to turn the enemy's flank. During the whole battle that ensued there was no further news of him.

"By 9 o'clock the outnumbered and exhausted Makhnovists began to lose ground. Already they were fighting on the outskirts of the village, and from all sides the enemy reinforcements that were coming up brought new bursts of fire to bear upon them. They retreated slowly, and the staff of the Insurrectionary Army, as well as everyone in the village who could handle a carbine, armed themselves and joined in the fighting.

"This was the critical moment. It seemed that the battle, and with it the whole cause of the insurgents, was lost. The order was given for every one, even the women, to be ready to fire on the enemy in the village streets. All prepared for the supreme hour of the battle and of their lives.

"But suddenly the machine-gun fire of the enemy, and their frantic cheers, began to grow weaker and then to recede into the distance. The defenders of the village realised that the enemy was retreating and that the battle was now taking place some distance away. It was Makhno who, appearing unexpectedly, at the very moment when his troops were driven back and were preparing to fight in the streets of Peregonovska, had decided the fate of the battle. Covered with dust and fatigued from his exertions, he reached the enemy flank through a deep ravine. Without a cry, but with a burning resolve fixed on his features, he threw himself on the Denikinists at full gallop, followed by his escort, and broke into their ranks.

"All exhaustion, all discouragement, disappeared like magic

from the Makhnovists. 'Batko is here! Batko is playing with his sabre!' could be heard everywhere. And with redoubled energy they all pushed forward, following their beloved guide who seemed doomed to death. A hand-to-hand combat of incredible ferocity, a 'hacking', as the Makhnovists called it, followed.

"However valorous the 1st Officers' Regiment of Simferopol may have been, they were thrown into retreat, at first slowly and in an orderly manner, trying to halt the impetus of the Makhnovists, and then in ever greater precipitation and disorder. They ended by fleeing for their lives. The other regiments, seized by panic, followed them, and finally all of Denikin's troops were routed, leaving their arms and trying to save themselves by swimming the River Siniukha, about fifteen kilometres from Peregonovska. They still hoped to be able to dig in on the opposite bank.

"But Makhno hastened to take advantage of the situation, which he understood perfectly. He sent his cavalry and artillery at full speed in pursuit of the retreating enemy, and himself went at the head of the best mounted regiment by a short cut which would enable him to catch the fugitives from behind. It was a trip of about twelve or fifteen kilometres.

"At the very moment when Denikin's troops reached the river, they were overtaken by the Makhnovist cavalry, and hundreds of them perished there. Most of them, however, had time to cross to the other bank, but there Makhno himself was awaiting them. The Denikinist staff, and a reserve regiment which was with it, were surprised and taken prisoner. Many officers hanged themselves with their leather belts from the trees in a nearby wood in order to avoid falling into the hands of the Makhnovists. Only an insignificant part of these troops who had raged for months in the stubborn pursuit of Makhno managed to save themselves. The 1st Simferopol Regiment of officers and several other were entirely cut down by insurgent sabres. The route of their retreat was strewn with corpses for a distance of two or three kilometres.[1]

[1]At nightfall I myself went slowly on horseback and a little to the rear of my comrades over this Calvary of the Denikinist regiments. I shall never forget the fantastic spectacle of those hundreds of human bodies, savagely cut down in their prime, lying under the starry sky, isolated or piled in heaps along the road, and in infinitely strange and varied positions, undressed to their underwear or even naked, covered with dust and blood, but themselves bloodless and greenish in the starlight. Many of them lacked arms, others were horribly mutilated, some had no heads, some were split into two almost separate halves by terrible sabre blows. From time to time, I got down from my horse, bent anxiously over these mute

And, however horrible this spectacle was to some, it was only the natural outcome of the duel between Denikin's army and the Makhnovists. During the whole pursuit, the former had no thought except to exterminate the insurgents. The slightest error on Makhno's part would inevitably have meant the same fate for the Insurrectionary Army. Even the women who supported that army or fought alongside their men would not have been spared. The Makhnovists were experienced enough to know that." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 229-232).

Once Denikin's main force had been wiped out, the Makhnovists lost no time and, following three routes at once, they set off towards the Dnieper and their own country. This return was accomplished at a wild pace. The day after the defeat of Denikin's troops, Makhno was already more than a hundred kilometres from the battlefield. Accompanied by his escort, he moved forty kilometres ahead of the bulk of the army. A day later, and the Makhnovists were masters of Dolinskaia, Krivoi-Rog and Nikopol. The next day the Kitchkass Bridge was taken at full speed and the city of Alexandrovsk fell into the hands of the insurgents.

In their furious advance it seemed as though they were entering the enchanted kingdom of a Sleeping Beauty. No-one had yet heard of the events at Uman. No-one knew the fate of the Makhnovists. The Denikinists had taken no precautions for defence, they were plunged in the lethargy that is customary in the depths of rear echelons. Like spring lightning the Makhnovists struck their enemies. After Alexandrovsk, it was the turn of Pologai, then Gulai-Polya, Berdiansk, Mariupol. At the end of ten days, the whole of Central Ukraine was free of troops and authorities.

But it was not only a matter of troops and authorities. Like a gigantic broom, passing through cities, towns, villages and hamlets, the Insurrectionary Army swept away every vestige of exploitation and servitude. The returned gentry, who did not

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and immobile bodies, which were already stiff, as if I hoped to penetrate an impossible mystery. "This is what all of us would now be if they had won," I thought. "Is it Fate? Luck? Justice?" The next day the local peasants buried all this débris in a vast common grave beside the road.

expect anything of the kind, the rich peasants (*kulaks*), the big industrialists, the police, the priests, the Denikinist mayors, the officers lying in ambush—all these were swept out of the victorious path of *Makhnovitchina.* The prisons, the police stations and posts, all these symbols of the people's servitude were destroyed, and all those who were known to be active enemies of the peasants and workers were condemned to death. Everywhere the big landowners and the *kulaks* perished in great numbers. This fact suffices to give the lie to the myth spread by the Bolsheviks about the so-called *"kulak"* character of the Makhnovist movement.

In this connection a typical episode which I witnessed comes to my memory. On their return, several Makhnovist regiments took a fairly important village. They halted to let the men and horses rest and recuperate. Our Propaganda Commission, which arrived with them, was accommodated by a peasant family who lived in the village square, just opposite the church.

We had hardly entered when we heard movement and shouting outside. Going out, we saw a crowd of peasants who were explaining something to the Makhnovist partisans. "Yes, indeed, Comrades, the swine drew up a list of all the names, forty of them, and sent it to the authorities. All these men were shot . . ."

We learnt that they meant the village priest. According to the peasants, he had denounced a number of the inhabitants to the Denikinist authorities as suspects or sympathisers with Makhnovism. A rapid investigation which some of the insurgents carried out on the spot demonstrated that the peasants were telling the truth.

They decided to go to the priest's house, but the peasants said that it was locked and he was not there. Some thought that the pope had fled, and others believed he was hiding in the church itself. A crowd of peasants and insurgents went there. The door was closed and a great locked padlock hung outside.

"Look," cried some, "he cannot be there if the door is locked on the outside." But others who were better informed said that the pope, not having time to flee, had induced his sacristan to lock him in the church to make it appear that he had fled. In order to make sure, some of the insurgents broke open the lock with blows of their rifle butts, and entered the church. They

explored the interior thoroughly, and found no-one. But they did discover a chamber pot that had been used and a supply of food.

They were now sure that the pope was hiding in the church. Having heard the crowd enter, he had climbed into the tower, hoping that his pursuers, not finding him below, would give up looking. The belfry was reached by a narrow wooden staircase, and the insurgents rushed up it with angry cries and a great clatter of sabres and guns.

Those who were watching from the square suddenly saw the tall figure of a man in a black cassock, gesturing and crying desperately, and clearly very much afraid, appear from under the roof of the bell-tower. He was young, and his long, straw-coloured hair floated out in the wind. His face was contorted with terror, and he stretched out his arms towards the square and cried plaintively: "Little brothers! Little brothers! I have done nothing, I have done nothing. Have pity, little brothers!"

But already vigorous arms were seizing him from behind and dragging him down by the tail of his cassock. They pushed him out of the church and across the square into the courtyard of our host. Many peasants and insurgents entered. Others remained in the square, in front of the open gate.

Immediately an improvised people's trial was organised. Our Commission was not part of it, but we remained as witnesses. We let the people do it themselves. "Well," they shouted to the priest, "What do you have to say? You'll have to pay now. Make your farewells, and say your prayers if you wish!"

"My little brothers, my little brothers," he repeated, trembling all over. "I am innocent, I am innocent, I have done nothing, little brothers."

"What do you mean, you have done nothing?" shouted several voices. "Didn't you denounce young Ivan, and Paul, and Serge the hunchback, and others as well? Wasn't it you who drew up the list? Do you want us to take you to the cemetery and show you the graves of your victims? Or to go and search for the papers in the police station? We might still find the list in your handwriting."

The pope fell on his knees and continually repeated, with

haggard eyes and his body dripping with sweat: "Little brothers, pardon me, pity me, I have done nothing." A young woman who belonged to our commission happened to be near him. Still on his knees, he seized the hem of her skirt, brought it to his lips, and begged: "My little sister, protect me. I am innocent. Save me, little sister!"

"What do you want me to do?" she asked him. "If you are innocent, defend yourself. These men are no wild animals. If you are really innocent, they will not harm you. But if you are guilty, what can I do?"

An insurgent on horseback entered the courtyard, pushing his way through the crowd. Informed of what was happening, he stopped behind the pope, and from his horse, began furiously whipping the unfortunate's back. At each blow of the whip he repeated: "That is for having fooled the people! That is for having fooled the people!" The crowd watched him impassively.

"Enough, Comrade," I said softly. "After all he was not a torturer."

"Oh yes," they cried ironically around me, "they never tortured anyone, did they?"

Another insurgent advanced. He shook the pope roughly. "Well, get up! Enough of this comedy! Stand up!"

The accused did not cry out any more. Very pale, hardly conscious of what was happening, he stood up. His gaze was lost in the distance, and he moved his lips without speaking.

The insurgent signalled to several comrades, who immediately surrounded the pope. "Comrades," he cried to the peasants, "you all say that this man, a proved counter-revolutionist, has drawn up and sent to the White authorities a list of 'suspects' and that as a consequence of this denunciation several peasants were arrested and executed. Is that right?"

"Yes, that is the truth!" roared the crowd. "He had forty of us assassinated. The whole village knows it."

And again they mentioned the names of the victims and called upon definite witnesses. Several relatives of the executed men came to confirm the facts. The authorities themselves had spoken to them of the list drawn up by the priest in explanation of their actions.

The priest said no more. "Are there any peasants here to defend this man?" asked the insurgent. "Does anyone doubt his guilt?" No one moved.

Then the insurgent seized the pope. Brutally he took off his cassock. "What fine cloth!" he said. "With this, we can make a beautiful black flag. Our's is all worn out."

Then he said to the pope. "Now get on your knees and say your prayers without turning round."

The condemned man did so. He went down on his knees, and with folded hands began to murmur. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come . . . ." Two insurgents came up behind him. They drew their revolvers, aimed and fired several bullets into his back. The shots rang out, dry and implacable. The body fell over. It was finished. The crowd disbanded slowly talking about the event.

Makhno told of several other dramatic episodes in which he had taken part during his thunderous return. Toward evening, accompanied by several horsemen, all dressed like Denikinist officers, he would present himself to some big nobleman, known to be a fierce reactionary, an admirer of Denikin, and an executioner of the peasants.

The apparent officers, returning from a mission, wished to rest a bit, to pass the night on the estate and leave again next morning. Naturally, they were received enthusiastically. "Messieurs the officers" could take their ease. The estate was well guarded by a detachment of Denikinists. They had nothing to fear.

A feast would be organised in honour of the visitors. The officer of the guard and several faithful friends would attend. Delicious foods, rare wines and fine liqueurs would be served. Tongues would be loosened. Everyone would talk effusively, cursing the "Makhnovist bandits" and all the rebels, wishing for their speedy and complete suppression, drinking the health of Denikin and the White Army. Sometimes the over-trusting noble would show his guests his magnificent arms depot, ready for every eventuality.

Towards the end of the feast, Makhno would brutally reveal his identity and an indescribable scene of surprise, terror and

confusion would follow. "The property is surrounded by Makhnovists, the guard is disarmed. You must pay."

Neither cries, nor supplications, nor attempts to flee would have any effect. The lord, his friends and faithful agents, the officers of the guard, would be executed on the spot. The soldiers of the guard would be thoroughly questioned and treated accordingly. The episode over, they would carry off the arms and go on to another nest of feudalism.

The occupation of the central Ukraine by the Makhnovists was a mortal danger to Denikin's whole counter-revolutionary campaign. In fact, it was between Volnovakha and Mariupol that the supply base of his army was located and immense stores of munitions were accumulated in all the cities of this region. To be sure, all these supplies did not fall immediately into the hands of the Makhnovists; around Volnovakha, for example, the battle between them and Denikin's numerous reserves raged for five days. But, since all the railroads of the region were in the insurgents' hands, not a shell could get out, and no war material could reach Denikin's troops, either in the north or elsewhere.

As at Volnovakha, several other groups of Denikinist reserves in various places fought the Makhnovists but soon they were all conquered and annihilated. Then the flood of *Makhnovitchina* rolled towards the bottom of the Donetz basin and the north. In October the insurgents took the city of Ekaterinoslav.

Denikin was forced to abandon his march on Moscow. In haste, he sent his best troops to the Gulai-Polya front. But he was too late. The fire was raging throughout the whole country from the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov to Kharkov and Poltava. Thanks to reinforcements, especially a great number of armoured cars and the excellent cavalry commanded by Mamontov and Chkouro, the Whites succeeded for the moment in making the Makhnovists retreat from Mariupol, Berdiansk and Gulai-Polya, the Makhnovists at the same time took Sinelnikovo, Pavlograd, Ekaterinoslav and other cities and localities; so that Denikin could not gain any advantage from his few purely local successes.

In the course of October and November, Denikin's main forces, descending from the north, carried on a furious fight with Makhno. At the end of November, the Makhnovists, half of whom, more-

over, were stricken by a terrible epidemic of typhus, were forced to abandon Ekaterinoslav and regroup again in the south. But Denikin could no longer consolidate himself. The Makhnovists continued to harrass him in every direction. Moreover, the Red Army, coming down from the north on his tracks, was constantly jostling him. His army was on the point of collapse. Soon the best elements of his troops—the Caucasians—refused to continue fighting against Makhno. They abandoned their positions—the command could not stop them—and set out for their own country. This was the beginning of the complete downfall of the Denikinist army.

It is necessary to emphasise here the historic fact that the honour of having annihilated the Denikinist counter-revolution in the autumn of 1919, belongs entirely to the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army. If the insurgents had not won the decisive victory of Peregonovka, and had not continued to sap the bases in Denikin's rear, destroying his supply service for artillery, food and ammunition, the Whites would probably have entered Moscow in December 1919 at the latest.

Having learned of the retreat of Denikin's best troops, the Bolsheviks, who at first were surprised and only later found out the real reason for this about-face (the defeat at Peregonovka and its consequences) quickly recognised the advantages which they could gain from it. They attacked Denikin near Orel and precipitated his general retreat. But this battle, as well as several others between the retreating Whites and the Reds who were pursuing them, had a distinctly secondary importance. The resistance on the part of the Whites was only to protect their retreat and the evacuation of munitions and supplies. Along the whole length of the route from Orel, through Kursk and to the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the Red Army advanced almost without resistance. Its entry into the Ukraine and the regions of the Caucasus, on the tracks of the retreating Whites was effected exactly the same way as, a year earlier, the fall of the Hetman Skoropadsky cleared the way for the Bolshevik advance.

It was the Makhnovists who bore the brunt of the White army's retreat from the north. Until its final collapse, it gave

much trouble to the Insurrectionary Army. The Bolsheviks, saved indirectly by the revolutionary partisans, returned to the Ukraine to harvest the laurels they had not won.

CHAPTER 4
The Makhnovists in the Liberated Regions

THE PERMANENT armed struggle, the life of a "kingdom on wheels" which denied the population of the Makhnovist region any kind of stability, also denied them, inevitably, the possibility of extensive positive and constructive activity. Nevertheless, whenever it was possible, the movement gave evidence of great organic vitality and the working masses demonstrated a remarkable creative will and capacity.

Let us give a few examples. We have spoken, more than once, of the Makhnovist press. Despite the various obstacles and difficulties of the time, the Makhnovists, who remained in direct contact with the Anarchist "Nabat" Federation, continued to publish leaflets, newspapers, etc. They even found time to produce a sizeable booklet, under the title *General Theses of the Revolutionary (Makhnovist) Insurgents Concerning the Free Soviets.*

The newspaper *Road to Freedom* which sometimes appeared daily and sometimes weekly, was primarily devoted to the popular and concrete exposition of libertarian ideas. *Nabat,* concerned more with theory and doctrine, appeared every week. We should also mention *The Makhnovist Voice,* a newspaper which dealt primarily with the interests, problems and tasks of the Makhnovist movement and its army.

As for *General Theses,* this pamphlet summarised the Makhnovist's views on the burning problems of the hour: the economic organisation of the region and the free Soviets; the social basis of the society that was to be built, the problem of defence, the exercise of justice, etc.

A question frequently asked is: How did the Makhnovists behave in the cities and towns that they took in the course of the struggle? In what way did they organise the civil population? In what way did they organise the life of the conquered cities, *i.e.* administration, production, trade, municipal services, etc.?

Since a great many myths and slanders have circulated on this subject, it is necessary to expose them and establish the truth. And since I was with the Makhnovist army at the very time when, after the battle of Peregonovka, they took several important cities, such as Alexandrovsk, Ekaterinoslav and others, I can give the reader a first-hand and accurate account.

The first concern of the Makhnovists, as soon as they entered some city as conquerors, was to remove the dangerous misunderstanding that they were a new power, a new political party, a kind of dictatorship. They immediately posted on the walls large notices in which they said approximately the following to the population:

"To all the workers of the city and its environs!

"Workers, your city is for the present occupied by the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army. This army does not serve any political party, any power, any dictatorship. On the contrary, it seeks to free the region of all political power, of all dictatorship. It strives to protect the freedom of action, the free life of the workers, against all exploitation and domination.

"The Makhnovist Army does not therefore represent any authority. It will not subject anyone to any obligation whatsoever. Its role is confined to defending the freedom of the workers. The freedom of the peasants and the workers belongs to themselves, and should not suffer any restriction.

"It is up to the workers and peasants themselves to act, to organise themselves, to reach mutual understanding in all fields of their lives, in so far as they desire it, and in whatever way they may think right.

"They must, therefore, know right away, that the Makhnovist Army will not impose on them, will not dictate to them, will not order them to do anything. The Makhnovists can only help them, by giving them opinions or advice, by putting at their disposal the intellectual, military and other forces that they need. But they cannot, and, in any case, will not govern them or prescribe for them in any way."[1]

[1]In certain cities the Makhnovists appointed a "commander"; his function consisted only of serving as a contact man between the troops and the population, to make certain measures dictated by military necessity, which might have certain repercussions on the life of the inhabitants, and which the military command felt it opportune to take. These commanders had no authority over the population and did not interfere in any way with their civil life.

Nearly always these notices ended with an invitation to the working population of the city and its environs to attend a big meeting where the Makhnovist comrades would set forth their views in a more detailed manner, and give, if necessary, some practical advice for beginning to organise the life of the region on a basis of freedom and economic equality, without authority and without the exploitation of man by man.

When, for some reason, such an invitation could not appear on the same notice, it was made a little later, by means of a small special notice.

Usually, although at first a little surprised by this absolutely new way of acting, the population quickly got used to the situation, and set about the task of free organisation with great enthusiasm and success.

It goes without saying that in the meantime, reassured about the attitude of the "military force", the city simply resumed its normal appearance and its usual way of life; the shops reopened, work started again where it was possible, the various administrations resumed their functions, the markets were held. Thus, in an atmosphere of peace and freedom, the workers prepared for positive activity to replace the old worn-out system in a methodical manner.

In each liberated region, the Makhnovists were the only organisation with enough forces to be able to impose their will on the enemy. But they never used these forces for the purpose of domination or even for any political influence. They never used them against their purely political or ideological opponents. The military opponents, the conspirators against the freedom of action of the workers, the police, the prisons, these were the elements against which the efforts of the Makhnovist army were directed.

As for free ideological activity, exchange of ideas, discussion, propaganda and the freedom of organisations and associations of a non-authoritarian nature, the Makhnovists guaranteed, everywhere and integrally, the revolutionary principles of freedom of speech, press, conscience, assembly, and political, ideological or other association. In all the cities and towns that were occupied, they began by lifting all the prohibitions and repealing all the

restrictions imposed on the organs of the press and on political organisations by whatever power.

At Berdiansk, the prison was dynamited, in the presence of an enormous crowd, which took an active part in its destruction. At Alexandrovsk, Krivoi-Rog, Ekaterinoslav and elsewhere, the prisons were demolished or burned. Everywhere the workers cheered this act.

Complete freedom of speech, press, assembly and association of any kind and for everyone was immediately proclaimed. Here is the authentic text of the *Declaration* in which the Makhnovists made known this proposition in the localities they occupied.

"I. All Socialist[1] political parties, organisations and tendencies have the right to propagate their ideas, theories, views and opinions freely, both orally and in writing. No restriction of Socialist freedom of speech and press will be allowed, and no persecution may take place in this domain.

"Remark:—Military communiqués may not be printed unless they are supplied by the management of the central organ of the revolutionary insurgents, the *Road to Freedom.*

"II. In allowing all political parties and organisations full and complete freedom to propagate their ideas, the Makhnovist Insurgent Army wishes to inform all the parties that any attempt to prepare, organise and impose a *political authority* on the working masses will not be permitted by the revolutionary insurgents, such an act having nothing in common with freedom of ideas and propaganda.

Ekaterinoslav, November 5th, 1919.

Revolutionary Military Council of the Makhnovist Insurgent Army."

In the course of the whole Russian Revolution, the period of the *Makhnovtchina* in the Ukraine was the only one in which the true freedom of the working masses found full expression. While

[1]They spoke here of Socialist parties and other organisations not because they wanted to keep these rights from the non-Socialists, but only because in the midst of a popular revolution the rightist elements were not active. There was not even any question of them. It was natural that the bourgeoisie would not dare, in the circumstances, to publish its press, and that the printing workers, masters of the printing houses, would flatly refuse to print it. It was therefore not worth speaking of it. The logical accent fell on "all" and not on "Socialist". If, nevertheless, the reactionaries succeeded in printing and publishing their works, no one was disturbed by it. For, in the new situation, this did not represent any danger.

the region remained free, the workers of the cities and districts occupied by the Makhnovists could say and do, for the first time, anything they wanted and as they wanted. And furthermore, they at last had the opportunity to organise their life and work themselves, according to their own judgment, according to their own feelings of justice and truth.

During the few weeks that the Makhnovists spent at Ekaterinoslav, five or six newspapers of various political orientations appeared with full freedom—the Right Social-Revolutionary paper *Narodovlastie* (The People's Power), the Left Social-Revolutionary *Znamia Vostania* (The Standard of Revolt), the Bolshevik *Star*, and others. To tell the truth, the Bolsheviks had less right to freedom of press and association, because they had destroyed, everywhere that they could, the freedom of press and association for the working class, and also because their organisation at Ekaterinoslav had taken a direct part in the criminal invasion of the Gulai-Polya region in June 1919 and it would have been only justice to inflict a severe punishment on them. But, in order not to injure the great principles of freedom of speech and assembly, they were not disturbed and could enjoy, along with all the other political tendencies, all the rights inscribed on the banner of the social revolution.

The only restriction that the Makhnovists considered necessary to impose on the Bolsheviks, the Social-Revolutionaries and other statists was the prohibition against the formation of those Jacobin "revolutionary committees" which sought to impose a dictatorship on the people. Several occurrences proved that this measure was not unjustified.

As soon as the Makhnovist troops took Alexandrovsk and Ekaterinoslav, the local Bolsheviks, coming out of their hiding places, hastened to organise this kind of committee (the "Rev-Coms") seeking to establish their political power and govern the population. At Alexandrovsk, the members of such a committee went so far as to propose to Makhno a "division of spheres of action", leaving him the military power and reserving for the committee full freedom of action and all political and civil authority. Makhno advised them to "go and take up some honest trade", instead of seeking to impose their will on the labouring

population. A similar incident occurred at Ekaterinoslav.

This attitude of the Makhnovists was just and logical. Precisely because they wanted to insure and defend full freedom of speech, press, organisation, etc., they could without any hesitation take any measure against those formations which sought to stifle this freedom, to suppress other organisations and impose their will and dictatorial authority on the working masses.

And the Makhnovists did not hesitate to do so. At Alexandrovsk, Makhno threatened to arrest and shoot all the members of the "Rev-Com" if they made the least attempt of this nature. He acted in the same way at Ekaterinoslav. And when, in November 1919, the commander of the 3rd Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Regiment, Polonsky, who had Communist leanings, was convicted of having participated in this kind of action, he was executed along with his accomplices.

At the end of the month, the Makhnovists were forced to leave Ekaterinoslav. But they had time to demonstrate to the working masses that true freedom resided in the hands of the workers themselves, and that it began to radiate and develop as soon as the libertarian spirit and true equality of rights were established among them.

Alexandrovsk and the surrounding region were the first places in which the Makhnovists remained for a fairly long time. Immediately, they invited the working population to participate in a general conference of the workers of the city.

The conference began with a detailed report by the Makhnovists on the military situation in the district. Then it proposed that the workers organise the life of the liberated region themselves, that is to say reconstruct their organisation that had been destroyed by the reaction; get the factories and shops back into production as soon as possible, organise Consumers' Co-operatives, get together right away with the peasants of the surrounding countryside and establish direct and regular relations between the workers' and peasants' organisations for the purpose of exchanging products, etc.

The workers enthusiastically acclaimed all these ideas. But, at first, they hesitated to carry them out, troubled by their novelty, and moreover, uncertain because of the nearness of the front.

They feared the return of the Whites—or the Reds—in the near future. As always, the instability of the situation prevented positive work.

Nevertheless, matters did not rest there. A few days later, a second conference took place. The problems of organising life according to the principles of self-administration by the workers were examined and discussed with animation. Finally the conference reached the crucial point—the precise way to go about it, the first step to take.

The proposition was made to form a Commission of Initiative, composed of delegates of several active labour unions. The conference would give this Commission the task of working out a project for immediate action. Several members of the railwaymen's and the shoemakers' unions declared that they were ready to organise immediately this Commission of Initiative which would proceed to create the indispensable workers' organs, to reactivate, as quickly as possible, the economic and social life of the region. The Commission went energetically to work. Soon the railway workers got the trains running again, several factories reopened their doors, several unions were re-established, etc.

While waiting for more fundamental reforms, it was decided that the money in use—a kind of paper money of various issues—would continue to serve as a means of exchange. But this problem was of secondary importance, since for some time the population had been using other methods of exchange.

Shortly after the workers' meetings, a big regional congress of workers was called at Alexandrovsk for October 20th, 1919. This congress deserves particular attention, since it was very exceptional in the way it was organised, in its procedures and in its accomplishments. I was an active participant and can give a detailed account.

In taking the initiative of calling a regional workers' congress, the Makhnovists had assumed a very delicate task. They hoped to give an important impetus to the activity of the population, which was necessary, praiseworthy and understandable. But on the other hand, they had to avoid imposing themselves on the congress and the population, they had to avoid the appearance of dictating.

It was important, above all, that this congress should be different from those called by the authorities of a political party (or a dominant caste), who would submit to the congress ready-made resolutions, destined to be adopted docilely, after a semblance of discussion, and imposed on the so-called delegates, under threat of the repression of all eventual opposition. Moreover, the Makhnovists had a number of questions concerning the Insurrectionary Army to submit to the congress. The fate of the army and the whole task it had undertaken depended on the way the congress answered these questions. But, even in this special field, the Makhnovists tried to avoid any kind of pressure on the delegates.

To avoid all pitfalls, the following was decided:

1. No "electoral campaign" would take place. The Makhnovists confined themselves to notifying the villages, organisations, etc. that they should elect and send a delegate or delegates, to a workers' congress at Alexandrovsk on October 20th. Thus the population could designate and instruct their delegates in complete freedom. 2. At the opening of the congress, a representative of the Makhnovists would explain to the delegates that the congress had been called, this time by the Makhnovists themselves, since problems concerning the Insurrectionary Army as such were the main questions to be discussed; that, at the same time, the congress certainly had to settle problems concerning the life of the population; that in both cases, its deliberations and decisions would be absolutely free from all pressure, and the delegates would not be exposed to any danger, whatever their attitude might be; and, finally, that this congress should be considered an extraordinary one, and that the workers of the region should subsequently call, on their own initiative, their own congress, which they should carry on as they wished, to settle the problems of their lives. 3. Directly after the opening, the delegates should themselves elect the board of the congress, and modify to suit themselves the agenda which was proposed to them —and not imposed on them—by the Makhnovists.

Two or three days before the congress, I experienced a curious episode. One evening, a very young man presented himself to me. He identified himself as Comrade Lubim, a

member of the local committee of the Left Social Revolutionary party. I immediately noticed his overwrought condition, and, in great excitement, he went to the point that had led him to come to me without any preliminaries.

"Comrade V.", he cried, pacing up and down in the little hotel room in which we were, "Excuse my crudeness, but the danger is immense. You are certainly not aware of it. And there is not a minute to lose. Very well, you are Anarchists, therefore utopians, and therefore naive. But you can't carry your naiveté to the point of stupidity. You haven't even the right to do it, since it isn't only a question of yourselves, but of other people and of a whole cause."

I confessed that I did not understand a word of his tirade.

"Now then," he continued, more and more excited, "you call a congress of peasants and workers. This congress will have enormous importance. But you are such babies! in your ineffable naiveté, what do you do? You send out little slips of paper on which is scrawled that a congress will take place! That is all. It's frightening, it's crazy. No explanation, no propaganda, no electoral campaign, no list of candidates, nothing, nothing! I beg you, Comrade V., open your eyes a little! In your situation, you have to be a little realistic, after all! Do something, while there is still time. Send agitators, present candidates to the voters. Give us time to make a little campaign. For what would you say if the population—who are mainly peasants—send you reactionary delegates who demand the calling of the Constituent Assembly, or even the restoration of the monarchy? The people are seriously influenced by the counter-revolution. And what would you do if the majority of the delegates are counter-revolutionary and sabotage your congress. Act, therefore, before it is too late! Postpone the congress a little while and take some steps."

I understood. As a member of a political party, Lubim saw things in that way.

"Listen, Lubim," I said to him, "If, in the existing conditions, in the midst of a popular revolution, and after everything that has happened, the working masses send counter-revolutionaries and monarchists to their own congress, then the whole of my life's work will have been a profound error, and I shall have only one thing

to do—to blow out my brains with that revolver you see on my desk."

"We must talk seriously." he interrupted, "and not dramatise . . . "

"I assure you, Comrade Lubim, that I am talking very seriously. We will change nothing in our procedure, and if the congress is counter-revolutionary, I will kill myself. I could not survive such a terrible disillusionment. And now, please take note of one basic fact. It is not *I* who am calling the congress, nor was it I who decided how to call it. All that is the work of a group of comrades. I have no power to alter anything."

"Yes, I know, but you have great influence. You could propose a change. They would listen to you."

"I have no desire to propose it, Lubim, since we are all in agreement."

The conversation ended, and Lubim, unconsoled, left me.

On October 20th, 1919, more than two hundred delegates, peasants and workers, met in the congress hall. Beside the delegates, several places were reserved for representatives of the right-wing Socialist Parties—Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks—and those of the Left-Social-Revolutionaries. They all attended the congress with a consultative voice. Among the Left-Social-Revolutionaries I saw Comrade Lubim.

What struck me especially on that first day of the congress was a coldness or rather a mistrust which nearly all the delegates seemed to manifest. We learned later that they expected a congress like so many others; they expected to see on the platform men with revolvers in their belts who would manoeuvre the delegates and make them vote for resolutions which had been prepared in advance. The meeting was frozen, and it took some time to thaw it.

I had the job of opening the congress, and I gave the delegates the agreed explanations and declared that they should first elect an executive committee and then consider the agenda proposed by the Makhnovists.

The members of the congress wished me to preside over their meetings. I consulted my comrades and then agreed. But I declared to the delegates that my role would be strictly limited to the technical conduct of the congress, that is, to following the

agenda that was adopted, to recognising the speakers, giving them the floor, facilitating the order of business, etc., and that the delegates should deliberate and reach their decisions in complete freedom, without fearing any pressure or manoeuvring from me.

Immediately a right-wing Socialist asked for the floor. He delivered a violent attack on the organisers of the congress. "Comrade delegates," he said, "we Socialists consider it our duty to warn you that a disgraceful comedy is being acted here. They are not imposing anything on you, they say! Yet already they have very adroitly imposed an Anarchist chairman on you, and you will continue to be manoeuvred by these people."

Makhno, who had arrived a few minutes earlier to wish the congress good luck and excuse himself for having to leave for the front, took the floor and replied sharply to the Socialist speaker. He reminded the delegates of the complete freedom of their election, and, accusing the Socialists of being the faithful defenders of the bourgeoisie, he advised their representatives not to disturb the work of the congress by political interventions. "You are not delegates," he ended, "Therefore, if the congress does not please you, you are free to leave."

Nobody opposed this, and four or five Socialists demonstratively left the hall, protesting vehemently at such an "expulsion". Nobody seemed to regret their departure. On the contrary, the meeting seemed satified and a little less frigid than before.

After this interruption, one of the delegates got up to speak. "Comrades," he said, "before passing to the agenda, I would like to submit a preliminary question which, in my opinion, is of great importance. Just now, a word was mentioned here—the bourgeoisie. Clearly, the bourgeoisie is being attacked as if we knew perfectly what it is, and as if everyone were in agreement about it. But this seems to me a great error. The term *bourgeoisie* is not clear to everybody. And I am of the opinion that because of its importance it would be useful, before we set to work, to define it precisely and know what exactly we mean by it."

Despite the orator's skill (I felt that notwithstanding his simple peasant costume he was not a real peasant), the gist of his speech demonstrated clearly that we had among us a defender of the bourgeoisie and that his intention was to sound out the congress and

if possible to undermine the spirit of the delegates. He certainly expected to be supported—consciously or ingenuously—by an appreciable number of delegates. If he had succeeded, the congress would have been in danger of falling into ridiculous confusion, and its work might have been seriously disturbed.

The moment was tense. I had, as I had just explained to the congress—no right to impose myself and eliminate by some simple device the delegate's unfortunate proposal. It was up to the congress, to the other delegates, to decide the question in complete freedom. Their mentality was not yet evident. All of them were unknowns, and obviously very distrustful unknowns at that. Deciding to let the incident take its course, I asked myself what was going to happen. And Lubim's apprehensions occurred to me.

As all these thoughts passed rapidly through my mind, the delegate finished his speech and sat down. For a moment, I saw distinctly, the gathering was puzzled. Then, quite suddenly and almost as if it had been arranged in advance, delegates began to call out from all over the hall.

"Hey, what kind of a bird is this delegate? Where does he come from? Who sent him? If he doesn't know what the bourgeoisie is after everything that has happened, they made a queer choice in sending him here! Tell us old boy, haven't you found out yet what the bourgeoisie is? Well, you must have a thick skull. You'd better go home and find out, or else keep quiet and don't take us for idiots."

"We have other things to do than waste time splitting hairs," cried other delegates. "There are questions to settle which are important for the whole region. And for more than an hour we have been fooling around instead of working. It's beginning to look like sabotage. Let's get to work."

"Yes, yes, enough fooling, let's get down to work," came the shouts from all sides.

The pro-bourgeois delegate swallowed it all without a word. He had made a mistake. He was completely silent for the rest of the conference, which lasted nearly a week, and during that whole time, he remained isolated from the other delegates.

While the delegates were thus berating their unfortunate colleague, I looked at Lubim. He seemed surprised and pleased.

However, the preliminary incidents were not yet finished, for the storm had hardly died down over the last interruption when Lubim himself leaped to the platform.

"Comrades," he began, "excuse my intervention. It will be brief. I make it in the name of the local committee of the Left Social-Revolutionary Party. This time it is a really important question. According to our chairman's declaration, he doesn't want to preside effectively. And you must be aware that he is not in fact fulfilling the real function of chairman of the congress. Comrades, we Left Social-Revolutionaries find that very bad and fear it will be harmful. It means that your congress has to work without a head, without direction. Comrades, have you ever seen an organism without a head? No, comrades, that is not possible. It would mean disorder and chaos. We have had enough of that already. No, it is impossible to work usefully, fruitfully and unconfusedly under these conditions. You need a *head,* for the congress, you need a real chairman, a real head."

As Lubim delivered his diatribe in a rather tragic and imploring tone, his intervention sounded more and more ridiculous with each repetition of the word "head". But, since my method of procedure had not yet proved itself, I wondered if the delegates might not be impressed by Lubim's ideas.

"We have had enough of those heads," came shouted from all over the hall. "Always heads and more heads! Let us try and do without them for once. Let us try to work really freely. Comrade V. has explained that he will help the congress technically. That is enough. It is up to us to observe our own discipline, to work well and keep our eyes open. We don't want any more of these 'heads' who lead us like puppets and who call that 'work and discipline'."

Lubim could do nothing but sit down. This was the last incident. I set about reading the agenda and the congress began its work. Archinov was quite correct when he said that in its discipline, in the orderliness of its work, in the prodigious enthusiasm that animated the delegates, in its serious and concentrated character, in the importance of its decisions and in the results it achieved, this congress was exceptional.

The work was accomplished rapidly, and in perfect order,

with remarkable unanimity, intimacy and ardour. By the end of the third day, all signs of distrust had disappeared. The delegates were thoroughly inspired by the freedom of their activity and the importance of their task. They consecrated themselves to it without reservations. They were convinced that they were working on their own and for their own cause.

There were no grand speeches or grandiose resolutions. The work assumed a practical and down-to-earth character. When a rather complicated problem needed reducing to simple terms, or when the delegates wanted clarification before they began their work, they asked to be presented with a detailed report, and I or some other qualified comrade would give an explanation. After a short discussion, the delegates would then set about working for definite results. Once agreed on the basic principles of a question, they usually created a special commission, which would draw up a very thoughtful project and arrive at practical solutions instead of composing literary resolutions. In this way a number of immediate and concrete questions, of great interest to the life of the region or the defence of its freedom, were eagerly discussed and worked over in their smallest detail by the committees and the delegates.

In my capacity of Technical Chairman, as I was called, I had only to supervise the order of business, formulate and announce the results of each completed task, call upon the delegates to consider and adopt certain rules of procedure, etc. The most important thing was that the congress functioned under the auspices of absolute and genuine freedom. No influence from above, no element of constraint, was felt.

The idea of free Soviets, genuinely functioning in the interests of the working population; the question of direct relations between peasants and city workers, based on mutual exchange of the products of their labour; the launching of a libertarian and egalitarian social organisation in the cities and the country; all these questions were seriously and closely studied by the delegates themselves, with the assistance and co-operation of qualified comrades.

Among other things, the congress resolved numerous problems concerning the Insurrectionary Army, its organisation and reinforce-

ment. It was decided that the whole male population, up to the age of 48, would go to serve in this army. In keeping with the spirit of the congress, this enrolment would be voluntary, but as general and numerous as possible, in view of the extremely dangerous and precarious situation in which the region found itself.

The congress also decided that the supplying of the army would be done primarily by free gifts from the peasants, in addition to the spoils of victory and requisitions from the privileged groups. The size of these gifts would be carefully established, according to the size of each family.

As for the purely "political" questions, the congress decided that the workers, doing without any authority, would organise their economic, political and administrative life for themselves, by means of their own abilities, and through their own direct organs, united on a federative basis. Archinov tells us that:

"The peasants, among whom there were old and even ancient men, said that this was the first congress where they felt not only perfectly free and their own masters, but also real brothers, and that they would never forget it. And, indeed, it is hardly likely that anyone who took part in that congress could ever forget it. For many, if not for all, it remained engraved for ever on their memories as a beautiful dream of the life in which true liberty would bring men together, giving them the opportunity to live united at heart, joined by a feeling of love and brotherhood.

"And when they left, the peasants emphasised the necessity of putting the decisions of the congress into practice. The delegates took away with them copies of the resolutions in order to make them known all over the countryside. It is certain that at the end of three or four weeks the results of the congress would have been known all over the district and that the next congress, called on the initiative of the peasants and workers themselves, would not have failed to attract the interest and active participation of great masses of workers.

"Unfortunately, the true freedom of the labouring masses is continually being destroyed by its worst enemy, Power. The delegates had hardly time to return to their homes, when many of the villages were again occupied by Denikin's troops, coming by forced marches from the northern front. To be sure, this time the invasion was only of short duration; it was the death agony of a dying enemy. But it halted the constructive work of the peasants at the most vital moment, and since another authority equally hostile to the ideas of freedom for the masses (Bolshevism) was

approaching from the north, this invasion did irreparable harm to the workers' cause; not only was it impossible to assemble a new congress, but even the decisions of the first could not be put into practice." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 242-4)

I cannot pass over in silence certain episodes which marked the last phase of the congress. A short while before its termination, when I announced the classic "general questions", several delegates undertook and carried out a delicate task which gave another proof of the complete independence of the congress and of the enthusiasm to which it gave rise, as well as the moral influence it exercised in the course of its labours.

"Comrades," said a delegate who took the floor at this moment, "before ending our work and dispersing, several delegates have decided to bring to the knowledge of the congress some painful and regrettable facts which in our opinion should receive the attention of the members. It has come to our ears that the many sick and wounded of the Insurrectionary Army are very badly cared for because of the lack of medicine, medical help, etc. To make sure, we ourselves visited the hospitals and other places where these unfortunate men have been placed. Comrades, what we have just seen is very sad. Not only are the sick and wounded deprived of all medical care, but they are not even humanely lodged or fed. The greater part are sleeping any old way, even on the ground, without mattresses, pillows or covers. It seems that there is not even enough straw in the city to soften the hardness of the ground a little. Many of these poor men die only because of lack of care. Nobody looks after them. We understand very well that, in the difficult conditions which exist, the staff of our army has not the time to supervise this need. Comrade Makhno also is absorbed by the immediate problems of the front. All the more reason, Comrades, why the congress should take over. These sick and wounded are our comrades, our brothers, our sons. They are suffering for the cause of us all. I am sure that with a little good-will we can at least find some straw to ease their sufferings. Comrades, I propose to the congress that it immediately name a commission which will concern itself energetically with this matter and do everything in its power to organise this service. It should also get in touch with all the doctors and druggists in the city, and request their aid and assistance."

Not only was the proposition adopted by the whole congress, but fifteen delegates volunteered to form a commission to attend to the matter. These delegates, who at first had expected to return to their homes in a day or two after a sham congress, did not hesitate to sacrifice their own interests and delay their return in order to serve the comrades in distress. They had to remain several days in Alexandrovsk and accomplished their task successfully. They found the straw, and managed to organise a free-lance medical service.

[After this matter had been quickly settled] another delegate claimed the floor. "Comrades," he declared, "I want to speak to you about another matter that is equally disturbing. We have learned that a certain amount of friction has occurred between the civil population and the services of the Insurrectionary Army. In particular, it has been reported to us that in the Army there exists a counter-espionage service which engages in arbitrary and uncontrolled actions—of which some are very serious, rather like the Bolshevik Cheka. Searches, arrests, even torture and executions are reported. We do not know if these rumours are true, but some complaints we have heard certainly seemed serious. It would seriously prejudice and even endanger our whole cause. We do not want to interfere in purely military matters, but we have a duty to oppose abuses and excesses if they really exist, for they will turn the population against our movement Since it enjoys the confidence and general esteem of the population, the congress has a duty to make a basic enquiry on this point, to find out the truth, to take steps where they are needed and to reassure the people. It is our congress, emanating from the living interests of the workers, which at this moment is the supreme institution of the region. It is above everything else, for it represents the workers themselves. I therefore propose that it immediately create a commission in charge of investigating these stories and acting in accordance [with its findings]."

Immediately a commission of several delegates was constituted for this purpose. Such an initiative on the part of workers' delegates would not have been possible under the Bolshevik régime. It was by activity of this kind that the congress gave a preview of the way in which a society should function from the beginning if it is based on a desire for progress and self-realisation.

We should add that the events that followed did not permit this commission to complete its work to the end. The incessant fighting, the movements of the army, the urgent tasks which absorbed all its services, prevented it.

A final incident remains to be told. Yet another delegate rose to his feet. "Comrades," he said, "since the congress is acting against certain defects and weaknesses, let me mention another regrettable incident. It is not very important, but all the same it merits our attention because of the sad state of mind of which it gives evidence. All of you must have read the notices posted on the walls of our city several days ago, bearing the signature of Comrade Klein, military commander of Alexandrovsky. In this notice, Commander Klein calls on the population to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages to excess, and especially not to go out in the street drunk. That is very fair and good. The form of the notice is not at all insulting or gross, it is not insolent or authoritarian, and one can only congratulate Comrade Klein on it. Only, comrades, not later than the day before yesterday, a popular evening party took place here with music, dancing and other distractions, in this very building where the congress is sitting. Not only insurgents, but also citizens and citizenesses attended it. I hasten to say to you that there is absolutely nothing reprehensible about that. The young people amused themselves and relaxed. That is entirely human and natural. But there was also a great deal of drinking at this party. Many insurgents and citizens got blind drunk. To see for yourselves you have only to look at the number of empty bottles piled up in the passage. (*Laughter*). Wait, comrades, the principal object of my intervention is not that. One amuses oneself, one drinks, one gets drunk. That isn't so bad. But what is more serious is the fact that one of those who got as drunk as a pig was our Comrade Klein, one of the commanders of the army, military commander of the city and the signatory of the excellent notice against drunkenness! Comrades, he was so drunk that he couldn't walk and had to be put in a carriage and taken home in the early morning. And, on the way, he behaved scandalously, cursing and so forth. So, comrades, a question arises: in drawing up and signing his notice did Comrade Klein believe that he himself was above the rest of the

citizens, exempt from the good conduct that he preaches for others? Should he not, on the contrary, be the first to set a good example? In my opinion, he has committed a fault so serious that it should not be disregarded."

While Klein's conduct was really fairly harmless, and the delegates considered the incident as rather comic, it aroused a certain amount of feeling. The annoyance at Klein was general, for his behaviour might be the expression of a culpable state of mind, that of a "chief" who considered himself above the "mass" and believed that he could do anything.

"Klein must be called right away!" someone proposed. "Let him come and explain himself before the congress!" Directly, three or four delegates were sent after Klein, with the mission of bringing him back. A half hour later, the delegates returned with him.

I was very curious to see what his attitude would be. Klein was one of the best commanders of the Insurrectionary Army. Young, courageous, very energetic and combative—physically a big, well-built fellow, with a hard appearance and warlike gestures —he always threw himself into the hottest part of the battle and feared nothing and nobody. He had been wounded many times. Well liked, as much by his colleagues as by the ordinary soldiers, he was one of those who had thrown over the Bolsheviks and brought Makhno several regiments of the Red Army. The son of a peasant family of German origin, if I am not mistaken, he was rough and uncouth in manner.

He knew that in any circumstances, he would be vigorously supported and defended by his colleagues—the other commanders and Makhno himself. Would he have enough knowledge to realise that a congress of working people was above him and above the army and Makhno? Would he understand that the workers and their congress were the masters: that the army, Makhno, etc. were only the servants of the common cause, bound to be held accountable at all times by the workers and their organs? Such were the questions that preoccupied me while the congress awaited the return of the mission.

Such a conception was entirely new. The Bolsheviks had done everything to wipe it out of the spirit of the masses. It would

be something to see, for example, if a workers' congress called a commissar or a commander of the Red Army to order! Of course, that is absolutely inconceivable. But even supposing that somehow a workers' congress dared to do it, with what indignation, with what self-possession would this commissar or commander denounce the congress, while playing with his weapons on the platform and singing his own praises: "What!" he would shout, "you, a simple collection of workers, have the nerve to call to account a commissar, a practical leader, with exploits, wounds, citations to his credit, an esteemed, celebrated, decorated leader? You have no such right! I am only responsible to my superiors. If you have anything to reproach me for, address yourselves to them."

Would not Klein be tempted to use similar language? Would he sincerely understand an entirely different situation and an entirely different psychological attitude?

Smartly clad in his uniform and well armed, Klein mounted the platform. He had a rather surprised air, and it seemed to me that he was uneasy.

"Comrade Klein," the questioning delegate asked him, "you are the military commander of our city?"

"Yes."

"You are the one who drew up and had posted the notice against the abuse of beverages and drunkenness in public places?"

"Yes, comrade, it was I."

"Tell me, Comrade Klein, as a citizen of our city, and its military commander, do you consider yourself morally obliged to obey your own recommendations or do you believe yourself outside of or above this notice?"

Visibly uneasy and confused, Klein took a few steps to the edge of the platform and said very sincerely in an uncertain voice.

"Comrades, I was wrong. I know it. I made a mistake in getting disgracefully drunk the other day. But, listen to me a little and try to understand. I am a fighting man, a man of the front, a soldier. I am no bureaucrat. I don't know why in spite of my protests they landed me with this job of commander of the city. As commander I don't have a bloody thing to do, except stay all day at a desk and sign papers. That isn't for me! I need action, the open air, the front, companions. I am bored to death here.

And that's why I got drunk the other evening. Comrades, I would like to make up for my mistake. For that, you have only to ask that I be sent back to the front. There, I can give real service. But here, at this cursed post of commander, I can't promise you anything. Let them find another man for my place, a man who can do this job. Forgive me, comrades, and have me sent to the front."

The delegates asked him to go out for a few minutes. He obeyed docilely. They deliberated on his case. It was evident that his conduct was not due to the mentality of a vainglorious, overbearing leader. That was all they wanted to know. The congress very clearly recognised his sincerity and his reasons. They called him back to tell him that, taking account of his explanation, they would not hold his mistake against him and would do what was necessary to have him sent back to the front. He thanked the delegates and left very simply, as he had come. The delegates intervened in his favour, and a few days later he returned to the front.

To some readers, these episodes may seem trivial and insignificant, and not worth so many pages. I would venture to say that from a revolutionary standpoint, I consider them infinitely more important, more suggestive, and more useful in their slightest details than all the speeches of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, delivered before, during and after the revolution.

[And I would like to] relate one more little episode—a personal one—which took place outside the congress itself. As I was leaving, I met Lubim, who was smiling radiantly. "You cannot imagine," he told me, "why I am so pleased. You must have seen how busy I was during the congress. Do you know what I did? I have specialised in the formation of scouting units and special detachments. This very question came up on the agenda. Well, for two days, I worked with the committee of delegates in charge of studying it, and finding a practical solution. I gave them a lot of help. They thanked me for my work. And I have really done something good and necessary. I know that is going to help the cause, and I am very pleased."

"Lubim," I said to him, "tell me sincerely: in the course of this good and necessary work, did you think for a single instant of your political rôle? Did you recall your position as a member

of a political party? Did you think of being responsible before your party? Was not your useful work, in fact, an apolitical task, concrete and precise, a work of collaboration and co-operation, and not that of a 'head', of a 'direction that imposes itself', of governmental action?"

Lubim looked at me pensively.

"The congress was very fine, very successful, I admit it," he said.

"There, Lubim," I concluded, "reflect well upon it. You really played your part and did a good job at the moment when you left your political activity! And very simply helped your colleagues as a comrade who knew about the task. You should realise that that is the whole secret of the success of the congress. And that is also the whole secret of the success of the revolution. It is like this that all revolutions should act, both on a local level and on a vaster scale. When the revolutionists and the masses have learned that, the real victory of the revolution is assured."

I never saw Lubim again. I do not know what became of him. If he is alive, I do not know what he thinks to-day. But I hope these lines may come to his eyes, and that he remembers.

* * *

A few days after the end of the Alexandrovsk congress, the Makhnovists finally took Ekaterinoslav. But they could not organise—or even try to organise—anything positive there. Denikin's troops, who were driven out of the city, managed to dig in nearby, on the left bank of the Dnieper. Despite their efforts, the Makhnovists could not dislodge them. Daily, for a whole month, the Denikinists bombarded the city, which was within the range of the batteries on their numerous armoured trains. Each time the Cultural Commission of the Insurrectionary Army managed to call a meeting of the city's workers, the Denikinists, who were well-informed, fired great numbers of shells, especially on the places where the sessions were to be held. No serious work, no systematic organisation was possible. It was only possible to hold a few meetings in the suburbs.

"One of the favourite arguments of the Bolsheviks against the Makhnovists is the claim that the insurgents did nothing, while they were masters of Ekaterinoslav, to achieve a constructive

organisation of the life of that city. In saying this, the Bolsheviks hide from the masses two circumstances of capital importance. In the first place, the Makhnovists were never the representatives of a party or of any authority. At Ekaterinoslav, they acted as a revolutionary military detachment, mounting guard for the freedom of the city. In this capacity, it was not at all their job to try and achieve a constructive programme for the revolution. This task could only be carried out by the workers of the place. The Makhnovist army could, at most, help them with its opinions and advice, with its spirit of initiative and its organisational ability, and it did this as much as possible. In particular, the Bolsheviks say nothing of the exceptional situation in which the city was at that moment. During the whole time that the Makhnovists remained there, it was not only in a state of siege, but actually under bombardment. Not an hour passed without shells bursting. It was this situation that prevented the workers, and not the Makhnovist army, from setting about on the spot to organise life according to the principles of free action.

"As for the fable according to which the Makhnovists declared to the railway workers who came to them for help that they did not need railroads since the Steppes and their good horses were perfectly sufficient, this gross invention was started by Denikin's newspapers in October, 1919, and from that source the Bolsheviks took it to serve their own ends." (Peter Archinov, *Op. cit.*, p. 246).

This fable was added to the other myths and calumnies spread by the Bolsheviks for the purpose of compromising the Makhnovist movement in the eyes of the workers.

AT THE END of November, a terrible epidemic, which was spreading all over Russia, attacked the Insurrectionary Army. At least half the men were sick, and the death rate was high. This was the principal reason why the Makhnovists were obliged to abandon Ekaterinoslav when the city was attacked, towards the end of November, by Denikin's main forces, who were beating a retreat towards the Crimea with the Bolsheviks in pursuit.

Having left Ekaterinoslav, the Insurrectionary Army regrouped in the region between the cities of Melitopol, Nicopol and Alexandrovsk. It was in the last city that the Makhnovist staff was overtaken, at the end of December, 1919, by the high command of several divisions of the Red Army who were in pursuit of Denikin. For some time already, the Makhnovists had been expecting this

event, and, envisaging in the new circumstances a fraternal meeting rather than a collision, they had taken no precautions.

The meeting was exactly like several others that had preceded it. Friendly, and even cordial, in appearance, it might nevertheless conceal storms and surprises—and we waited for this to happen. Without any doubt, the Bolsheviks remembered with rancour and bitterness the blow given them recently by the Makhnovist troops which had left their army and taken with them several Red regiments. Without the slightest doubt, also, they could not long tolerate the presence at their side of a free army or of the independent movement of a whole region that did not recognise their authority. Sooner or later, conflict was inevitable, and it was clear that the Bolsheviks would not hesitate to attack at the first opportunity. As for the Makhnovists, they were more or less aware of this situation, and, while they were ready to reconcile all their differences peacefully and fraternally, they could not help feeling mistrustful.

However, the soldiers of the two armies greeted each other fraternally and a meeting took place at which the combatants shook hands and declared that they would fight together against the common enemies—capitalism and counter-revolution. Some units of the Red Army even showed a desire to go over to the Makhnovist ranks.

Eight days later the storm broke. The "Commander of the Insurrectionary Army"—Makhno—received an order from the Revolutionary Military Council of the 14th Corps of the Red Army to move the Insurrectionary Army to the Polish front.

Everyone understood immediately that this was the first step in a new attack on the Makhnovists. In itself, the order to leave for the Polish front was nonsensical for a number of reasons. In the first place, the Insurrectionary Army was subordinate neither to the 14th Corps nor to any other unit of the Red Army. The Red commander had no authority to give orders to the Insurrectionary Army, which alone had supported the whole weight of the fight against Denikin. Furthermore, even if this departure had been fraternally envisaged, it was materially impossible to carry it out, since half the men, as well as nearly all the commanders and staff, and Makhno himself, were sick. Finally, the fighting qualities and revolutionary usefulness of the Insurrectionary Army were

certainly much greater on their own ground, in the Ukraine, than on the Polish front, where this army, in unfamiliar surroundings and unknown [to the local population], would be obliged to fight for goals it did not understand. It was [with these arguments] that the Makhnovists replied to the Red commander's order, and flatly refused to carry it out.

But on both sides it was perfectly understood that the proposition, like the reply, was pure diplomacy. Everybody knew what was really involved. To send the Insurrectionary Army to the Polish front meant to cut off the main nerve-centre of the revolutionary movement in the Ukraine. That is just what the Bolsheviks wanted; they hoped to be the absolute masters of the region. If the Insurrectionary Army submitted, they would attain their objective. In case of refusal, they had prepared a thrust which (they hoped) would accomplish the same result. The Makhnovists knew this, and got ready to parry the blow.

The response to the Makhnovist refusal was not long in coming. But the Insurrectionary Army acted first, and thus averted immediate bloodshed. At the same time as they sent their reply to the Red headquarters, they addressed an appeal to the soldiers of the Red Army, calling on them not to be the dupes of the provocative manoeuvres of their leaders. Having done this, they broke camp, and set out for Gulai-Polya, which had just been evacuated by the Whites and was under no authority whatever. They arrived without accident, and for the moment the Red Army did not oppose their move. Only a few unimportant detachments and some isolated individuals who remained in the rear of the bulk of the troops were taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks. But two weeks later, in mid-January, 1920, the Bolsheviks declared Makhno and the members of his army outlaws for their refusal to go to the Polish front.

The third act of the drama began. It lasted for nine months, and it was marked by a violent struggle between the Makhnovists and the Communist authorities. We shall not go into details, but will confine ourselves to saying that on both sides it was a merciless struggle. In order to avert eventual fraternisation between the soldiers of the Red Army and the Makhnovists, the Bolshevik commander sent against the latter a division of Lettish sharpshooters and some Chinese detachments, that is to say, units whose members

had not the slightest idea of the true meaning of the Russian Revolution and were content blindly to obey the orders of their leaders. On the Bolshevik side, the struggle was conducted with incredible deceit and savagery.

Since the Red troops were ten times more numerous, Makhno's detachment and Makhno himself, by manoeuvring very skilfully and with the aid of the population, kept constantly out of their reach. At the same time, the Bolshevik High Command deliberately avoided open fighting with the Insurrectionary Army. It preferred another kind of war. By means of numerous reconnaissances, the Red Army found out the villages and localities where Makhnovist detachments were weak or non-existent. They then attacked these defenceless communities and occupied them almost without fighting. Thus the Bolsheviks were able to establish themselves solidly in several places, and thus to stop the free development of the region.

Everywhere that they did establish themselves, they made war, not on the Insurrectionary Army, but on the peasant population in general. Mass arrests and executions soon began, and the Denikinist repression paled beside that of the Bolsheviks. In speaking of the fight against the insurgents, the Communist press of the time would cite the number of Makhnovists defeated, captured or shot. But it always neglected to mention that it was usually a question, not of military insurgents, but of simple villagers, convicted or merely suspected of some sympathy for the Makhnovists. The arrival of the Red Army in a village meant the immediate arrest of many peasants who were later imprisoned and for the most part shot, either as Makhnovist insurgents or as "hostages". The village of Gulai-Polya passed many times from one side to the other. Naturally, it suffered greatly from the repeated invasions of the Bolsheviks, and every survivor in the village could tell of frightful cases of Communist repression. According to the most moderate estimates, more than 20,000 peasants and workers were shot or seriously injured by the Soviet authorities in the Ukraine at that time. Nearly as many were imprisoned or deported to Siberia or elsewhere.

Makhno himself, sick and often unconscious, more than once barely escaped falling into the hands of the enemy who were in search of him. He owed his safety—and also his cure—to the

sublime devotion of the peasants who would sometimes sacrifice themselves to gain time for the sick man to be moved to a safer place.

Naturally, the Makhnovists could not remain indifferent to such a monstrous distortion of the Revolution. To the Bolshevik terror they replied with blows no less severe, and used against their enemies all the guerilla methods they had formerly employed in their struggle against the Hetman Skoropadsky. When they captured Red prisoners, they disarmed the soldiers and set them free, knowing that they had been sent into battle under compulsion. Those of the soldiers who wished to join them were received fraternally. But as for the chiefs, the Commissars and the representatives of the Communist Party, they were generally put to the sword, unless for some good reason the private soldiers asked that they should be spared. Let us not forget that all Makhnovists, whoever they were, were invariably shot on the spot if they fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

The Soviet authorities and their agents often depicted the Makhnovists as common assassins without pity, as bandits without faith or law. They published long lists of soldiers of the Red Army and members of the Communist Party put to death by these "criminals". But they were always silent about the essential fact that these victims fell during combats started or provoked by the Communists themselves.

One of the greatest annoyances of the Bolshevik government was the knowledge that Makhno was alive but that they were unable to capture him. They were sure that to suppress him would be the equivalent of liquidating the movement. Therefore, throughout the summer of 1920, they fomented continual attempts to assassinate Makhno, none of which succeeded.

"All through the year of 1920 and even later," says Archinov, "the Soviet authorities carried on the fight against the Makhnovists, pretending to be fighting banditry. They engaged in intense agitation to persuade the country of this, using their press and all their means of propaganda to uphold the slander both within and outside Russia.

"At the same time, numerous divisions of sharpshooters and cavalry were sent against the insurgents, for the purpose of destroying the movement and pushing its members towards the

gulf of real banditry. The Makhnovist prisoners were pitilessly put to death, their families—fathers, mothers, wives, relatives—were tortured and killed, their property was pillaged or confiscated, their houses were destroyed. All this was practised on a large scale.

"A superhuman will and heroic efforts were needed by the vast masses of insurgents, in the face of all these horrors committed daily by the authorities, to retain intact their rigorously revolutionary position and not to fall, in exasperation, into the abyss of banditry. But the masses never lost their courage, they never lowered their revolutionary banner, but remained to the end faithful to their task.

"For those who saw it during this hard and painful period, this spectacle was a genuine miracle, demonstrating how deep was the faith in the revolution of these working masses, how strong their devotion to the cause whose ideas had won them over."

(*Op. cit.*, pp. 273-4).

At the end of the summer of 1920, the Makhnovists had to carry on the struggle, not merely against detachments of the Red Army, but against the whole Bolshevik system, against all its governmental forces in Russia and the Ukraine. Each day this struggle intensified and widened. In these conditions, the insurrectionary troops were sometimes obliged—so as to avoid encountering an enemy of too superior numbers—to leave their base and make forced marches of a thousand kilometres or more. Sometimes they had to retreat to the Donetz basin, sometimes to the departments of Kharkov and Poltava.

These involuntary wanderings were put to considerable use by the insurgents for propaganda purposes, and every village in which they halted for a day or two became a vast Makhnovist auditorium.

It should be added that the exceptionally difficult situation of the Insurrectionary Army did not prevent it from taking care of the perfection of its own organisation. After the defeat of Denikin and the return of the insurgents to their own region, a Council of Revolutionary (Makhnovist) Insurgents was created. It consisted of delegates from all units of the army and it functioned fairly regularly. It was concerned with questions which did not involve strictly military operations.

During the summer of 1920, when the army found itself in

particularly unstable and painful circumstances, such an institution became too cumbersome and was incapable of functioning satisfactorily. It was replaced by a smaller council, consisting of seven members, elected or ratified by the mass of the insurgents. This council was divided into three sections—military affairs and operations, organisation and general control, education, propaganda and culture.

CHAPTER 5
Wrangel's Offensive and Defeat

Now opens the fourth act [of our drama], that of Wrangel's expedition. The Tsarist ex-officer, Baron Wrangel, replaced Denikin at the head of the White movement. In the same areas—Crimea, the Caucasus, the Don and Kuban regions—he attempted to reassemble and reorganise the remnants of Denikin's troops. He was successful, and reinforced his basic troops with several successive drafts [on the population]. Since the disastrous policy of the Bolsheviks had turned increasingly wide sections of society against them, he finally succeeded in setting up a well-organised and completely loyal army.

By the spring of 1920, Wrangel began seriously to harass the Bolsheviks, and, since he was more ingenious and artful than his predecessor, he soon became dangerous. By the middle of the summer, it was evident that he was beginning to gain the upper hand. He pushed on slowly but surely, and soon his advance constituted a grave threat to the whole Donetz basin. Since the Bolsheviks were deeply involved, and undergoing reverses on the Polish front, the whole revolution was again in danger.

As at the time of Denikin's offensive, the Makhnovists decided to fight Wrangel to the full extent of their strength and ability. But each time the Red troops struck them from behind, and they had to abandon the firing line and retreat. At the same time, the Soviet authorities did not stop slandering and smearing the Makhnovists. Thus, for example, while continuing to treat them as "bandits" and "defenders of the *kulaks*", they spread the false news of an alliance between Makhno and Wrangel, and the representative of the Kharkov government did not hesitate to declare, at the plenary session of the Ekaterinoslav Soviet, that the authorities had written proof of this alliance. All these procedures were, to them, "tactics in the political struggle."

The Makhnovists could not remain indifferent to Wrangel's more and more menacing advance. They felt that it was important

to fight him without delay, without allowing him time to consolidate and extend his conquests. But what was to be done about the Communists? In the first place, they prevented the Makhnovists from acting. In the second, their dictatorship was as evil and as hostile to the workers' liberty as Wrangel's.

After having examined the problem from all sides, the Insurgent Council and the staff of the army decided that, despite everything else, Wrangel represented the Enemy No. 1 in relation to the Revolution, and that it was necessary to try and come to an understanding with the Bolsheviks. The question was then brought before the mass of the insurgents, and the latter decided at a huge meeting that the destruction of Wrangel might have important consequences. The assembly agreed with the opinion of the Council and the staff. It was decided to propose to the Communists that hostilities between them and the Makhnovists be suspended in order that together they might wipe out Wrangel.

In July and August, dispatches to this effect were sent to Moscow and Kharkov, in the name of the Council and the Commander of the Insurrectionary Army. They received no reply. The Communists continued their war against the Makhnovists, making war on them and slandering them.

In September, Ekaterinoslav had to be abandoned by the Communists, and almost without resistance, Wrangel took Berdiansk, Alexandrovsk, Gulai-Polya and Sinelnikovo. It was only then that a plenipotentiary delegation from the Central Committee of the Communist Party, with a certain Ivanov at its head, came to Starobelsk (in the Kharkov region), where the Makhnovists were then encamped, to begin negotiations on the subject of combined action against Wrangel. These negotiations took place on the spot. They resulted in a preliminary military and political agreement between the Makhnovists and the Soviet authorities. The clauses of this preliminary agreement were to be sent to Kharkov to be officially ratified. For this purpose, and also to maintain subsequent contact with the Bolshevik staff Budanoff and Popoff left for Kharkov.

Between the 10th and 15th December, 1920, the clauses of the agreement were put into final form and adopted by the two contracting parties. In spite of our desire for brevity, this historic document should be quoted in its entirety, for its contents are very

revealing, while the events that followed the conclusion of the pact cannot be understood or fully appreciated unless one knows all the details of the agreement.

"*Preliminary Political and Military Agreement between the Soviet Government of the Ukraine and the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine.*

"Part I—Political Agreement.

1. Immediate release of all Makhnovists and Anarchists imprisoned or in exile in the territories of the Soviet Republics; cessation of all persecutions of Makhnovists or Anarchists (only those who carry on armed conflict against the Soviet Government are not covered by this clause).

2. Complete freedom for all Makhnovists and Anarchists of all forms of public expression and propaganda for their principles and ideas, by speech and the press, with the exception of anything that might call for the violent overthrow of the Soviet Power, and on condition that the requirements of the military censorship be respected. For all kinds of publications, the Makhnovists and Anarchists, as revolutionary organisations recognised by the Soviet Government, may make use of the technical apparatus of the Soviet state, while naturally submitting to the technical rules for publications.

3. Free participation in elections to the Soviets; and the right of Makhnovists and Anarchists to be elected thereto. Free participation in the organisation of the forthcoming Fifth Pan-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets, which shall take place next December.

Signed (By mandate of the Soviet Government of the Ukrainian SSR): Yakoleff. Plenipotentiaries of the Council and the Commander of the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine: Kurilenko, Popoff.

"Part II—Military Agreement.

1. The Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine will join the armed forces of the Republic as a partisan army, subordinate, in regard to operations, to the supreme command of the Red Army. It will retain its established internal structure, and does not have to adopt the bases and principles of the regular Red Army.

2. While crossing Soviet territory, at the front, or going between fronts, the Insurrectionary Army will accept into its ranks neither detachments of nor deserters from the Red Army.

Remarks:

a. The units of the Red Army, as well as isolated Red soldiers, who have met and joined the Insurrectionary Army

behind the Wrangel front, shall re-enter the ranks of the Red Army when they again make contact with it.

b. The Makhnovist partisans behind the Wrangel front, as well as all men at present in the Insurrectionary Army, will remain there, even if they were previously mobilised by the Red Army.

3. For the purpose of destroying the common enemy—the White Army—the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine will inform the working masses that collaborate with it of the agreement that has been concluded, it will call upon the people to cease all action hostile to the Soviet power; for its part, the Soviet power will immediately publish the clauses of the agreement.

4. The families of combatants in the Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army living in the territories of the Soviet Republic shall enjoy the same rights as those of soldiers of the Red Army and for this purpose shall be supplied by the Soviet government of the Ukraine with the necessary documents.

Signed: Commander of the Southern Front: Frunze; Members of the Revolutionary Council of the Southern Front: Bela Kun, Gussev; Plenipotentiary Delegates of the Council and Commander of the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army: Kurilenko, Popoff."

In addition to the above mentioned three clauses of the political agreement, the representatives of the Council and Commander of the Makhnovist Army submitted to the Soviet Government a fourth special clause as follows:

"*Fourth Clause of the political agreement.*

"One of the essential principles of the Makhnovist movement being the struggle for self-administration of the workers, the Insurrectionary Army believes it should insist on the following fourth point: 'In the region where the Makhnovist Army is operating, the worker and peasant population will create its own free institutions for economic and political self-administration; these institutions will be autonomous and joined federatively—by means of agreements—with the governmental organs of the Soviet Republics.' "

In practice it was a question of reserving for the Makhnovist insurgents two or three departments of the Ukraine in which they could carry out their social experiments in complete freedom, while maintaining federative connection with the USSR. Although this

special clause did not constitute part of the signed agreement, the Makhnovists naturally attached very great importance to it.[1]

We urge the reader to examine closely the text of this agreement. It clearly distinguishes the two opposed tendencies: the one, statist and defending the usual privileges and prerogatives of authority; the other, popular and revolutionary, defending the usual demands of the subjugated masses. It is extremely significant that the first part of the agreement—which contains the political clauses and demands the natural rights of the workers—contains only Makhnovist theses. In this matter, the Soviet authorities had the classic attitude of all tyrannies: they sought to limit the demands formulated by the Makhnovists, bargained on all points, did everything possible to reduce the rights of the working people, rights which were inalienable from and indispensable for their real freedom.

Under various pretexts, the Soviet authorities delayed for a long time publishing this agreement. The Makhnovists felt that sign augured little good, and aware of the lack of sincerity of the Soviet authorities, they declared firmly that as long as the Agreement was not published, the Insurrectionary Army could not act according to its clauses. It was only after this direct pressure that the Soviet government finally decided to publish the text of the agreement. But they did not do the whole thing at once. They first published part II (the military agreement); then, after an interval, part I (the political agreement). The real meaning of the pact was thereby obscured. The greater proportion of the readers did not understand it precisely, which was what the Bolsheviks wanted. As for the special political clause (No. 4), the Ukrainian authorities separated it from the agreement, pretending that they had to confer with Moscow on this subject. Between October 15th and 20th, the Makhnovist army set out to attack Wrangel. The battle front extended from Sinelnikovo to Alexandrovsk-

[1]It is significant that after the conclusion of the pact with the Makhnovists, the Bolsheviks felt obliged to declare, through the Central Commissariat for War, that Makhno had never dealt with Wrangel, that the statements spread about were an error based on false information, etc. These declarations were published by the Central Commissariat for War under the title *Makhno and Wrangel* in the *Proletarian* and other Kharkov papers around October 20th, 1920.

Pologui-Berdiansk. The direction (of the attack) was towards Perekop.[1]

In the first battles, between Perekop and the city of Orekov, an important group of Wrangel's troops, commanded by General Drozdoff, was beaten and 4,000 soldiers taken prisoner.[2] Three weeks later, the region was liberated from Wrangel's troops. They withdrew towards the Crimea, and at the beginning of November, the Makhnovists, together with the Red Army, were already before Perekop.

A few days later, with the Red Army blocking Perekop, a part of the Makhnovist troops, following the orders of the staff, went thirty kilometres to the left of the isthmus and set out over the ice of the Sivach Strait, which at this time was frozen. The cavalry, commanded by Martchenko (an anarchist peasant, originally from Gulai-Polya) marched at the head, followed by a machine-gun regiment commanded by Kojin (a revolutionary peasant and a very brave commander). The crossing was made under violent and continuous fire from the enemy, which cost many lives. But the boldness and perseverence of the attackers finally broke the resistance of Wrangel's troops, who took flight. Then another Makhnovist army, the Crimean, under the command of Simon Karetnik (another anarchist peasant from Gulai-Polya) moved to the right towards Simferopol, which was taken by storm on the 13th and 14th of November. At the same time, the Red Army forced Perekop.

It is incontestable that, having entered the Crimea by [crossing the Strait of] Sivach, the Makhnovists contributed greatly to the taking of the Perekop Isthmus, hitherto reputed impregnable, by forcing Wrangel to retreat into the interior of the Crimea in order to avoid being surrounded in the gorges of Perekop. Wrangel's adventure was over. The remnants of his troops embarked in all haste from the southern shore of the Crimea and left for abroad.

[1]Perekop is a very narrow and hilly isthmus which connects the near-island of Crimea with the mainland.

[2]This was the moment that Makhno demanded, by telegram, the immediate release of Tchubenko and myself—I had been imprisoned at the end of December 1919. At this time the Bolsheviks praised to me the fighting qualities of the Makhnovist army.

WE HAVE MENTIONED that, with the abandonment of Ekaterinoslav and the second conflict with the Bolsheviks, followed by Wrangel's expedition, events of a military nature once again prevented all creative activity on the part of the labouring masses of the insurgent region. An exception can, however, be made of the village of Gulai-Polya.

We should here note that, while considered a village, Gulai-Polya is really a city and even a fairly large city. To be sure, at the time we are considering, its population was composed almost entirely of peasants, but it numbered from 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants. The village had several primary schools and two high schools. Its life was active, and the mentality of its population was very advanced. A number of intellectuals—teachers, professors and others—had been established there for some time.

Although, during the bitter struggle against Denikin, the Bolsheviks and Wrangel, Gulai-Polya changed hands many times, and although the Soviet government, despite the agreement, maintained a semi-blockade of the region and did as much as it could to prevent the free activity of the workers, the active core of the Makhnovists residing at Gulai-Polya carried on very energetic constructive work, with the help and enthusiastic support of the whole population.

First of all, they were concerned with the organisation of a free local workers' Soviet. This Soviet was to lay the foundations of the new economic and social life of the region, a life based on the principles of liberty and equality, free from all political authority. To this end the inhabitants of Gulai-Polya organised several preliminary meetings and ended by creating a Soviet which functioned for a few weeks. It was later destroyed by the Bolsheviks. At the same time, the Insurgents' Council drew up and published the *Fundamental Laws of the Free Soviet.*

They also devoted themselves actively to academic instruction and public education. This work was very urgent since the repeated armed invasions had involved terrible repercussions in the field of education. The teachers, having received no remuneration for a long time, had dispersed, and the school buildings were abandoned. In so far as circumstances permitted, the Makhnovists and the whole population of Gulai-Polya undertook the task of rebuilding the educational system.

What deserve special attention are the leading ideas on which the initiators based this work. [They were as follows]:

1. The workers themselves should supervise the process of educating the younger generation of workers.

2. The school should not merely be a source of indispensable knowledge, but also a means of developing conscious and free men, capable of struggling for a truly human society, and of living and acting in accordance therewith.

3. To fulfil these two conditions, the school should be independent and therefore separate from the Church and the State.

4. The teaching of the youth should be the work of those with the ability, aptitude, knowledge and other qualities necessary for this purpose. Naturally, it should be placed under the effective and vigilant control of the workers.

At Gulai-Polya there were some intellectuals who were supporters of the principles of the Free School of Francisco Ferrer.[1] Under their guidance, a lively movement developed and rapidly began to sketch out a widespread educational enterprise. The peasants and workers undertook the maintenance of the necessary teaching personnel for all the schools of the village and its environs, and a mixed commission, composed of peasants, workers and teachers, was created in order to take charge of providing for all the needs, economic as well as pedagogical, of the academic life. This commission drew up, in record time, a plan for free education, inspired by the ideas of Francisco Ferrer. At the same time, special courses for adults were organised and classes in "political" or rather social and ideological subjects began to function.

Soon many persons who had previously abandoned their activity as teachers and even left Gulai-Polya, became aware of the revival and returned to their posts, while a number of specialists, who lived elsewhere, came to the village to take part in the movement. In this way the work of education was restarted

[1]Francisco Ferrer, famous Spanish free-thinker, founder of a system of free education. An object of fierce hatred by the Catholic Church, he was falsely accused on its instigation of having taken part in revolutionary plots, and was shot in 1909. His execution gave rise to vast movements of protest throughout the whole world. Francisco Ferrer called himself an Anarchist.

on a new basis. We should also mention the resumption of theatrical performances which were inspired by the new ideas and accomplished some very interesting results.

All this creative spirit of the masses was brutally destroyed by a new and furious Bolshevik attack, which was unleashed over the whole Ukraine on November 26th, 1920.

AFTER ALL THAT had happened, no one among the Makhnovists believed in the revolutionary integrity of the Bolsheviks. They knew that only the danger of Wrangel's offensive had forced the latter to deal with Makhno. And they were certain to find some pretext for a new campaign against the *Makhnovitchina.* No one believed in either the solidity or the continuation of the agreement. But in general the Makhnovists supposed that the alliance would last for three or four months, and they hoped to take advantage of this lapse of time to carry on energetic propaganda in favour of the Makhnovist and libertarian ideas and movements. This hope was illusory.

The way in which the Bolshevik government had applied the clauses of the agreement was already significant and suspicious. It was evident that they had no idea of fulfilling the treaty honestly or effectively. They released only a trifling number of imprisoned Makhnovists and Anarchists, and they continued to prevent, by all possible methods, the ideological activity of the libertarian militants.

Absorbed by their military tasks, the Makhnovists could not for the moment concern themselves with this irregular situation. However, a certain amount of Anarchist activity was reborn in the Ukraine. Some propaganda was resumed and a few newspapers reappeared.

The interest and sympathy of the labouring population for the libertarian ideas and movement surpassed all expectation. Coming out of prison in Moscow and returning to the Ukraine, I was surprised to see crowds filling our meeting hall in Kharkov, every evening and for every lecture that was announced. Each time, we had to turn away hundreds of people. And in spite of the already intense cold at that season, many people would remain outside, listening to every word through the half-open door.

Soon the ranks of the Ukrainian Anarchists were enlarged by

a number of militants who came from Great Russia, where the Bolsheviks paid hardly any attention to the agreement concluded with Makhno, and every day the movement gained strength. This state of affairs could only hasten the reaction of the Bolsheviks, who were enraged at such success [for the Anarchists].

The Makhnovists counted heavily on the effects of the famous Fourth Clause of the political agreement. They insisted on the urgency of examining it and reaching a decision, for they were anxious to obtain the Bolsheviks' recognition of the right of economic and social self-government by the workers and the peasants. They demanded that the Soviet authorities choose between two possibilities; either to sign the article in question or to explain frankly why they were against it.

Little by little, it was on this question that the Anarchist propaganda concentrated. By the middle of November, this Fourth Clause had attracted public attention everywhere, and promised to assume capital importance in the future. But it was precisely this clause which seemed absolutely unacceptable in the eyes of the Bolsheviks.

It was around this time that an Anarchist congress was planned at Kharkov to establish the type of Anarchist activity to be carried on in the new circumstances. And it was around the same time that Lenin, reassured by the liquidation of Wrangel's adventure, began to prepare slyly for a new attack on the Makhnovists and the Anarchists, and ended by sending, one after another, his famous secret telegrams, of which the Anarchists were warned too late.

"As soon as Simon Karetnik's dispatch—announcing that he was with the insurrectionary troops in the Crimea and marching on Simferopol—had been sent to Gulai-Polya, Gregor Vassilevsky, Makhno's aide-de-camp, exclaimed: 'This is the end of the agreement. I wager that in a week the Bolsheviks will be on our backs.' That was said on November 16th, and on the 26th of the same month, the Bolsheviks treacherously attacked the Makhnovist staff and troops in the Crimea; they threw themselves at the same time on Gulai-Polya, seized the Makhnovist representatives at Kharkov, destroyed all the recently established Anarchist organisations there, and imprisoned all the Anarchists, of whom several had come for the congress. They proceeded in the same way all over the Ukraine." (P. Archinov, *op. cit.* pp. 297-8.)

CHAPTER 6

Third and Last War of the Bolsheviks Against the Makhnovists and Anarchists; Defeat of the Insurrectionary Army

Thus began the third and last war of the Bolsheviks against the Makhnovists, the Anarchists and the labouring masses of the Ukraine, a war which ended, after nine months of unequal and implacable struggle—with the military destruction of the free movement. Once again, brute force, based on deception and imposture, triumphed.

Naturally, the Bolshevik government was not slow to give explanations for its treachery. It pretended that the Makhnovists and the Anarchists were in the process of preparing a conspiracy and a vast insurrection against the Soviet government; it accused Makhno of having refused to go to the Caucasian front and of having started to levy troops from among the peasants in order to form an army against the Soviet authorities; it stated that instead of fighting Wrangel in the Crimea, the Makhnovists had been sniping at the rear-guard of the Red Army, etc.

It goes without saying that all these excuses were entirely untrue. But by repeating them, in the face of the forced silence of the Makhnovists and Anarchists, the Bolsheviks managed to make many people believe them, both abroad and in Russia.

There are several circumstances which make it possible for us to establish the truth [about this situation]:

1. On November 23rd, 1920, the Makhnovists arrested at Pologui and Gulai-Polya nine Bolshevik spies belonging to the 42nd Sharpshooters' Division of the Red Army, who confessed to having been sent to Gulai-Polya by the chief of the counter-espionage service to obtain information about the location of the houses of Makhno, the members of his staff, the commanders of the Insurrectionary Army and the members of the council. After this, they were supposed to remain in Gulai-Polya to await the

P. Rybin.

arrival of the Red Army and then point out where the persons in question were to be found. In case the unexpected arrival of the Red Army forced these persons to flee into hiding these spies were supposed to shadow and not lose sight of them. The spies declared that there was going to be an attack on Gulai-Polya by November 24th or 25th.

The Council of the Revolutionary Insurgents and the commander of the army then sent to Rakovsky, at this time president of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine, and also the Revolutionary Military Council of Kharkov, a detailed communication about this plot, demanding: I. The immediate arrest and arraignment before the Council of War of the chief of the 42nd Division and other persons involved in the plot; II. The prohibition of Red units travelling through Gulai-Polya. Pologui, Malaia-Tokmatchka and Turkenovka, in order to forestall any unpleasant incident.

The response of the Kharkov government was as follows: "The pretended 'plot' is only a simple misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the Soviet authorities, desirous of clearing up the matter, are putting it in the hands of a special commission and propose that the staff of the Makhnovist army delegate two members to take part in the work of this commission." This reply was sent by direct wire to Gulai-Polya from Kharkov on November 25.

The next morning, P. Rybin, secretary of the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents, again discussed this question and all the disputed points with Kharkov by direct wire. The Bolshevik authorities at Kharkov assured him that the affair of the 42nd Division would certainly be resolved to the complete satisfaction of the Makhnovists, and also added that the Fourth Clause of the political agreement was also about to be settled amicably, in a satisfactory manner.

This conversation with Rybin took place at 9 a.m. on November 26. But six hours earlier, in the middle of the night, the Makhnovist representatives at Kharkov had been seized, as well as all the Anarchists who were at Kharkov and elsewhere [in the Ukraine]. And exactly two hours after Rybin's conversation by direct wire, Gulai-Polya was surrounded on all sides by Red troops and subjected to a furious bombardment. On the same day and at the same hour, the Makhnovist army in the Crimea was

attacked. There the Bolsheviks succeeded by a ruse in capturing all members of the staff of that army, as well as its commander Simon Karetnik, and put them to death without exception.

2. Since I was at Kharkov with the representatives of the Makhnovist army and knew nothing of what was being plotted against us, I was delegated, on November 25, to see Rakovsky and learn directly from him what exactly was being done about the Fourth Clause of the agreement. Rakovsky received me very cordially, and invited me into his office. Sitting in a handsome armchair, and nonchalantly playing with an elegant paper knife, he assured me, smilingly, that the discussions between Kharkov and Moscow on the subject of the Fourth Clause were almost finished, that there was every reason to expect a satisfactory solution and that it would be a question of only a few days. But at the very moment when he was talking to me in this manner, the order to start the attack on the Anarchists and Makhnovists was in the drawer of the desk before which we sat.

The same evening, I gave a lecture on Anarchism at the Agricultural Institute at Kharkov. The hall was filled to capacity and the lecture ended very late, around 1 a.m. Returning home, I worked a little on an article for our newspaper, and went to bed about 2.30. I was hardly asleep when I was awakened by an ominous hubbub; shots, the clanking of weapons, the noise of boots on the stairs, knocking on doors, shouts and curses. I understood. I had only time to get dressed. Someone knocked furiously at the door of my room. "Open or we'll break down the door." As soon as the bolt was drawn, I was brutally seized, carried off and thrown into a cellar in which there were already several dozen of us. The Fourth Clause thus found a satisfactory solution.

3. On November 27th, the day after the attack on Gulai-Polya, the Makhnovists found on the Red Army prisoners whom they captured undated proclamations entitled *Forward Against Makhno!* and *Death to Makhnovism!* and published by the political section of the Fourth Army. The prisoners said they had received these proclamations on the 15th and 16th of the month. They contained a call to action against Makhno, who was accused of having violated the clauses of the political and military agree-

ment, of having refused to go to the Caucasian front, of having planned an uprising against the Soviet power, etc. This proved that all these accusations were fabricated and sent to the press even while the Insurrectionary Army was still in the process of beating a path across the Crimea and occupying Simferopol and while the Makhnovist representatives were peacefully working with the Soviet authorities at Kharkov and elsewhere.

4. During the months of October and November, 1920, *i.e.* while the military and political agreement between the Makhnovists and Bolsheviks was being negotiated and after it had just been completed, two Bolshevik plots to assassinate Makhno were uncovered by the Makhnovists.

[From all the facts that I have just recorded] it is evident that this vast operation [of the attack on Makhno] had to be carefully prepared and that its elaboration required at least two weeks. It was a question not merely of a simple treacherous assault on the Makhnovists, but of a meticulous scheme which was elaborated in all its details. The Bolsheviks even devised tricks to put the Makhnovists' vigilance to sleep, to lull them with false allegations of security, with lying promises, etc.

Such are the facts concerning the breaking of the pact between the Makhnovists and the Soviet Power. They are confirmed by certain documents of Soviet origin, *e.g.*, the order which was issued by Frunze, at the time commander of the Southern Front. This document suffices to demonstrate the treachery of the Bolsheviks and reduce to nothing all their lies and subterfuge.

"Order to Comrade Makhno, Commander of the Insurrectionary Army. Copies to Commanders of the armies on the Southern Front. No. 00149. Issued at General Headquarters, Melitopol, November 23, 1920.

"By reason of the cessation of hostilities against Wrangel and his complete defeat, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front considers that the task of the partisan army is completed. It therefore proposes to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Insurrectionary Army that it immediately begin transforming the insurrectionary partisan units into regular military units of the Red Army.

"There is no more reason for the Insurrectionary Army to continue as such. On the contrary, the existence, alongside of the

Red Army, of these units with a special organisation, pursuing special tasks, produces absolutely unacceptable results.[1]

"That is why the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front orders the Revolutionary Military Council of the Insurrectionary Army to do the following:

1. All units of the Insurrectionary Army formations at present in the Crimea should be immediately incorporated into the Fourth Soviet Army. The Revolutionary Military Council should take charge of this transfer.

2. The military formations at Gulai-Polya should be liquidated. The combatants will be distributed among the reserve detachments, according to the instructions of the commander of that part of the army.

3. The Revolutionary Military Council of the Insurrectionary Army shall take all necessary measures to explain to the combatants the need for this transformation.

Signed: M. Frunze, commander-in-chief of the Southern Front; Smilga, Member of the Revolutionary Military Council; Karatyguin, chief-of-staff."

The reader should recall the history of the agreement between

[1]Frunze mentions several cases where soldiers of the Red Army were disarmed and even killed by the Makhnovists. But all the cases of which he speaks were closely examined by himself, Rakovsky and the representatives of the Makhnovists at Kharkov, and it was conclusively established: 1. that the the Makhnovists had nothing to do with these misdeeds. 2. that if hostile acts towards the army were committed by certain military detachments which did not belong to the Makhnovist army, this was primarily due to the fact that the Soviet authorities had neglected to publish, at an opportune time, and intelligibly, their agreement with the insurgents. In fact, it was known that numerous isolated military units, not incorporated into the Makhnovist army (we will be obliged to return to this subject a little later in another connection) operated here and there in the Ukraine. The majority of these units, while acting on their own, nevertheless respected the opinion and attitude of the Insurrectionary Army. They would certainly have ceased all hostility towards the Soviet authorities and armies if they had known about the agreement concluded with the Makhnovists.

Frunze seeks to justify his order in the manner of the Jesuits, with arguments that seem plausible but are really false. For he could not admit the only true argument, the desire of the Bolsheviks to rid themselves completely of the Makhnovist army and movement, once the Bolshevik power had no further need of the Insurrectionary Army. If he admitted this, he would have had to give his reasons. But then the lies of the government and its real attitude towards the labouring masses would be revealed.

the Soviet government and the Makhnovists. The signing of the pact was preceded by negotiations between the Makhnovist plenipotentiaries and the Bolshevik delegation, headed by the Communist Ivanoff, which came to the Makhnovist camp at Starobelsk especially for this purpose. These negotiations were continued at Kharkov, where the Makhnovist representatives worked for three weeks with the Bolsheviks to conclude the pact satisfactorily. Each article was carefully examined and debated by the two parties. The final version of this agreement was approved by the two parties, that is to say, by the Soviet government and the revolutionary insurgent region in the person of the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents of the Ukraine. It was sealed by their respective signatures.

According to the very nature of this agreement, none of the articles could be suspended or modified without prior agreement of the contracting parties. But Frunze's order not only suppressed the first article of the military agreement, but negated the whole agreement. It proves that the agreement was never taken seriously by the Bolsheviks; that in drawing it up the latter were playing a shameful comedy; that the pact was only a gross deception, a manoeuvre, a snare, to persuade the Makhnovists to march on Wrangel and get themselves wiped out.

Even Frunze's order, despite its appearance of brutal candour or simplicity, was designed to serve as a manoeuvre, as is shown by the following facts:

1. At the same time that Order No. 00149 was received [by Makhno], the Fourth Army of the Crimea received an order to act against the Makhnovists with all the means at its disposal and to use all its military forces in case the insurgents refused to obey.

2. Neither the staff of the Insurrectionary Army, stationed at Gulai-Polya, nor the Makhnovist delegation at Kharkov, had any word of this order. The Makhnovists only learned about it three or four weeks after the Bolshevik aggression, through some newspapers which fell fortuitously into their hands. The explanation for this is simple. The Bolsheviks, who were preparing secretly for a surprise attack on the Makhnovists, could not afford to put them on their guard by sending them in advance a document of this sort, since the planned attack would then have inevitably

been repulsed.

3. At the same time they had to have a justification for their aggression. That is why Frunze's order was published in the papers only after the attack and the breach [with the Makhnovists]. It appeared for the first time on December 15, 1920, in the Kharkov paper *The Communist*.

All these machinations had as their objective the surprising of the Makhnovists, their destruction and the subsequent explanation of their actions by means of "justificatory evidence" to suggest that it was perfectly honourable.

As we have said elsewhere, the attack on the Makhnovists was accompanied by the mass arrest of Anarchist militants. These arrests, which took place all over the Ukraine, had as their purpose not only the total destruction of all Anarchist thought and activity, but also the stifling of any possibility of protest, of any attempt to explain to the people the real meaning of the events.

Not only the Anarchists proper, but also those who counted as their friends and acquaintances, or were interested in their literature, were arrested. At Elizabethgrad, fifteen youths between 15 and 18 years old were thrown into prison. It is true that the higher authorities at Nicolaev (the departmental capital) were dissatisfied with this capture, saying that they wanted real Anarchists and not children. But not one of these children was released on the spot.

At Kharkov, the pursuit of the Anarchists assumed proportions unheard of before. Snares and ambushes were organised to catch all the Anarchists in the city. A trap of this kind was set up in the Free Brotherhood Bookshop. Anyone who came to buy a book was seized and sent to the Cheka; they even imprisoned people who stopped to read the newspaper *Nabat* which appeared legally before the break and was posted on the wall of the bookshop.

One of the Kharkov Anarchists, Gregor Tsesnik, having escaped arrest, the Bolsheviks threw his wife, who had no political interests of any kind, into prison. She started a hunger strike, demanding her immediate release. The Bolsheviks then told her that if Tsesnik wanted to obtain her release, he had only to give himself up to the Cheka. Tsesnik, although seriously ill, did so and was imprisoned.

We have mentioned already that the staff of the Makhnovist army in the Crimea, as well as the commander, Simon Karetnik, were treacherously seized and executed on the spot. Martchenko, who commanded the cavalry, although surrounded and fiercely attacked by numerous units of the Bolshevik Fourth Army, managed to escape and break a passage through the natural obstacles and barricades of the fortified Perekop Isthmus. Leading his men, or rather the remnants of his men, by day and night forced marches, he succeeded in rejoining Makhno (who, as we will see presently, again escaped the Bolsheviks) at the little village of Kermentchik.

There were already rumours of the lucky escape of the Makhnovist army from the Crimea. Their return was impatiently awaited. Finally, on December 7th, a horseman arrived at full gallop to announce that Martchenko's troops would be there in a few hours. The Makhnovists at Kermentchik turned out excitedly to meet heroes.

Their anguish can be imagined when they finally saw the little group of horsemen which was slowly approaching in the distance. Instead of the powerful cavalry of 1,500 mounts, a handful of 250 men returned from the furnace. At their head were Martchenko and Taranovsky (another brave commander of the Insurrectionary Army).

"I have the honour of announcing to you the return of the Crimean army", said Martchenko with bitter irony. A few insurgents were able to smile. But Makhno himself was sombre and silent, trying to control his emotions. "Yes, brothers," continued Martchenko, "now, at last, we know what the Communists are."

A general assembly took place on the spot. The story of the events in the Crimea was retold. It was thus learned that the commander of the army, Karetnik, sent by the Bolshevik staff to Gulai-Polya, ostensibly to attend a military council, was treacherously arrested on the way; that Gavrilenko, chief-of-staff of the Crimean army and also all his aides and several of the unit commanders were deceived in the same way. All were shot immediately. The Cultural and Propaganda Commission at Simferopol was arrested without any military ruse. Thus the victorious Insurrectionary Army of the Crimea was betrayed and annihilated by the Bolsheviks, their allies of the day before.

[An experience of my own throws a further light on these

events.] Having been brought to the Cheka prison in Moscow after my arrest at Kharkov, I was called in one day by Samsonoff, who was then chief of the Secret Operations Section of the Cheka. Instead of questioning me, he drew me into a discussion of principles, and in this way we came to talk of the events in the Ukraine. I told him straightforwardly that I thought the behaviour of the Bolsheviks towards the Makhnovist movement was treacherous.

"Ah," he replied with animation, "you call it treacherous? That only demonstrates your ineradicable naiveté. As for us Bolsheviks, we see it as proof that we have learned much since the beginning of the Revolution and have now become really skilful statesmen. This time we did not let ourselves be victimised. When we needed Makhno, we took advantage of him, and when we had no further need of his services, and he began to be something of a nuisance, we got rid of him completely."

Samsonoff's words were a complete admission of the real reasons for the Bolshevik's behaviour and for all their machinations. They should be engraved in the brains of all those who seek to understand the true nature of State Communism.

IT REMAINS FOR US to tell briefly the last dramatic incidents of this death struggle between authority and the revolution. We have already said that, despite the meticulousness of the Bolsheviks' preparations and the suddenness of their attack, Makhno once again escaped them. On November 26th, when Gulai-Polya was surrounded by the Red troops, only a special group of about 250 Makhnovist horsemen (including Makhno himself) were there. With this handful of men, numerically insignificant, but stimulated by their anger, Makhno (who had hardly recovered from his sickness and was suffering from his wounds, the most recent of which was a fractured ankle bone) launched a counter-attack. He managed to rout the cavalry regiment of the Red Army which was advancing on Gulai-Polya from Uspenovka, and thus escaped from the enemy's grip.

Soon he was engaged in organising the units of insurgents that flocked to him from all sides, as well as some groups of Red soldiers who left the Bolsheviks and came to join him. He suc-

ceeded in forming a unit of 1,000 horsemen and 1,500 infantrymen, with which he attempted a counter attack. Eight days later, he was again master of Gulai-Polya, having routed the 42nd Division of the Red Army and taken nearly six thousand prisoners. Of the latter about two thousand men declared themselves willing to join the Insurrectionary Army; the rest were set free on the same day, after having attended a great popular meeting. Three days later, Makhno inflicted another serious defeat on the Bolsheviks near Andreevka. During the whole night and the following day, he fought two Divisions of the Red Army and ended by defeating them, again taking from eight to ten thousand prisoners.

Makhno then struck three further consecutive blows at the Red Army, near Komar, near Tzarekonstantinovka, and in the vicinity of Berdiansk. The Bolshevik infantry fought reluctantly and took advantage of every opportunity to surrender.

"As soon as they were taken prisoner," Archinov tells us, "the soldiers of the Red Army were set free. They were advised to return to their homes and no longer serve as instruments of Power to subjugate the people. But, the Makhnovists being forced to move on immediately, the freed prisoners were reinstated in their respective units a few days later. Indeed, the Soviet authorities organised special commissions to recapture the soldiers of the Red Army who were set free by the Makhnovists, and thus the latter were caught in a magic circle from which they could not escape. As for the Bolsheviks, their procedure was much simpler. Following the orders of the Special Commission for the Struggle against Makhnovism, all Makhnovist prisoners were shot on the spot." *Op. cit.*, p. 315).

For some time the Makhnovists were encouraged by the thought of the victory which they seemed to be winning. It appeared to them that it was only necessary to beat two or three Bolshevik Divisions for an important part of the Red Army to join them and the rest to retreat towards the North. But soon, the peasants of various districts brought news that the Bolsheviks were not content to pursue the Insurrectionary Army, but were installing whole regiments, primarily of cavalry, in the conquered villages.

In fact, Makhno was soon surrounded at Fedorovka, to the south of Gulai-Polya, by several divisions of infantry and cavalry. The battle lasted without respite from 2 a.m. to 4 p.m. Breaking through the enemy ranks, Makhno managed to escape to the north-

east. But three days later he had to fight another battle, near the village of Constantin, with a very large cavalry force and a vigorous artillery. From several officers who were taken prisoner, Makhno learned that there were four Bolshevik army corps, two of cavalry and two mixed, and that the Red commander hoped to surround him with the assistance of several further divisions.

This information agreed perfectly with that furnished by the peasants, as well as with the observations and conclusions of Makhno himself. It became increasingly clear that the defeat of two or three Red units was of no importance, in view of the enormous mass of troops which were being sent against the insurgents to obtain a decision at all costs; it was no longer a question of achieving a victory over the Bolshevik armies, but of avoiding the complete destruction of the Insurrectionary Army. This Army, reduced to some three thousand combatants, was obliged to fight daily, each time against an enemy four or five times superior in numbers and arms. In these conditions, catastrophe was no longer in doubt.

The Council of Revolutionary Insurgents then decided to abandon the southern region provisionally, leaving Makhno full freedom as to the direction of the general retreat.

"Makhno's genius was about to be submitted to a supreme test," says Archinov. "It appeared absolutely impossible to escape from the monstrous network of troops advancing from all sides towards the little group of insurgents; three thousand revolutionary militants were surrounded by an army of at least a hundred and fifty thousand men. But not for an instant did Makhno lose courage or presence of mind. He embarked on a heroic duel against this mass of troops.

"Surrounded by an infernal circle of Red divisions, he marched like a legendary Titan, fighting battle after battle, to the right, to the left, in front and to the rear. After routing several units of the Red Army and taking more than twenty thousand prisoners, Makhno—as if he were striking out blindly—set out first towards the east, in the direction of Yuzovska, although the workers of this mining region had warned him that he was awaited by an uninterrupted military barrier, and then turned sharply west, following fantastic routes which he alone knew.

"From this moment, the ordinary roads were completely abandoned. The movement of the army continued for hundreds of kilometres across fields and plateaux covered with snow and

ice. To accomplish this march, it was necessary to be endowed with a prodigious sense of direction and orientation. No map, no compass could be of any use in such movements. Maps and instruments could indicate the direction, but could not prevent falling into a ravine or a torrent, which did not once happen to the Makhnovist army. Such a march across the hilly and roadless steppes was possible because the troops knew the configuration of the Ukrainian steppes perfectly.

"This fabulous manoeuvre permitted the Makhnovist army to avoid hundreds of enemy cannon and machine-guns. It allowed it to defeat at Petrovo two brigades of the 1st Bolshevik Cavalry which, believing Makhno to be a hundred kilometres away, were taken completely by surprise.

"This unequal struggle lasted for several months, with incessant battles by day and night. Arriving in the department of Kiev, the Makhnovist army found itself, in the coldest part of winter, in a hilly, rocky country which made it necessary to abandon all the artillery, supplies and munitions and even most of the wagons. At the same time, two enemy cavalry divisions, called Red Cossacks, came from the western frontier to join the mass of armies sent by the Bolsheviks against Makhno.

"All possibility of escape now appeared non-existent. The country contained as few resources as a graveyard. There was nothing but cliffs and steep ravines, all covered with ice, over which one could only advance extremely slowly. On all sides there was an incessant barrage of cannon and machine-gun fire. None of the Makhnovists expected to get out to safety again, but none thought of dispersing in a shameful flight. They decided to die together.

"It was unspeakably sad to see this handful of men, alone among the cliffs, the sky and the enemy fire, ready to fight to the end, and already seemingly condemned to death. A heart-rending grief, a mortal anguish, took hold of one, driving one to scream in despair, yes, to scream to the whole universe, that a dreadful crime was about to be committed, and that what was greatest in the hearts of the people, the noblest and most sublime thing that the people had produced in the heroic centuries of its history, was about to be destroyed, was about to perish for ever.

"Makhno met honourably the test that fate had imposed on him. He advanced to the borders of Galicia, went back to Kiev, re-crossed the Dnieper near that city, went down into the department of Poltava, then into that of Kharkov, turned back north again towards Kursk, and, following the railway tracks between this point and Belograd, got out of the enemy circle into a much more favourable situation and left far behind him the many Bolshevik divisions sent to pursue him." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 317-20.)

This attempt to capture Makhno's army had failed, but the unequal duel between the handful of insurgents and the armies of the Soviet state was not over. The Bolshevik command continued to pursue its objective—the capture of the central nucleus of Makhnovism and its destruction. The Red divisions of the whole Ukraine were sent to overtake and blockade the remnants of the Insurrectionary Army. Soon, the iron vice clamped on the heroic handful of revolutionaries, and the death struggle began again. Instead of telling the end of the drama ourselves, we prefer to reprint here the letter which Makhno sent to Archinov after he had left Russia, and which the latter quoted in his book. It shows admirably the very last convulsions of the struggle.

"Two days after your departure, my dear friend, I took the village of Korotcha in the department of Kursk. I had several thousand copies of the *Statutes of the Free Soviets* printed, and set out through Varpiarka and the Don region towards the departments of Ekaterinoslav and Taurid. I had to fight fierce battles every day, on one side against the Communist infantry which followed us step by step, and on the other against the 2nd Cavalry Army, which was sent against us by the Bolshevik staff.

"You know our horsemen. The Red cavalry, unless it is supported by infantry and armoured cars, can never hold them. That is why I managed, though not without serious losses, to break through without changing my direction. Our army demonstrated every day that it was really a popular and revolutionary army. In the material conditions which it endured, it should have melted away immediately, but, on the contrary, it never ceased to grow in manpower and resources.

"In one of the serious battles which we had to fight, our special detachment of cavalry lost thirty men killed, half of whom were commanders, among others our dear and good friend—young in years but old in military exploits—the chief of the detachment Gabriel Troian. He was killed instantly by a machine-gun bullet. At his side also fell Appolon and several other brave and devoted comrades.

"At some distance from Gulai-Polya, we were joined by our new troops, fresh and full of spirit, who were commanded by Bravo and Parkhomenko. A little later, the first brigade of Budenny's 4th Cavalry Division with its commander, Maslak, at its head, came over to our side. The struggle against the authority and despotism of the Bolsheviks became ever fiercer.

"At the beginning of March, 1921,[1] I told Brova and Maslak to form, from among the troops who were with me, a special unit to proceed towards the Don and the Kuban. Another group was formed under the command of Parkhomenko and sent into the Voronedj region, where Parkhomenko was killed. A third group, comprising 600 horsemen and Ivanuk's regiment, was sent towards Kharkov.

"Around the same time, our best comrade and revolutionist, Vdovitchenko, was wounded in the fighting and had to be taken, accompanied by a small detachment, to Novospassovka for treatment. An expeditionary force of Bolsheviks discovered his hiding place, and, while defending themselves against the enemy, Vdovitchenko and his comrade-in-arms Matrossenko, seeing that they were about to be captured, both shot themselves. Matrossenko fell instantly dead, but Vdovitchenko's bullet was embedded under his skull above the neck. When the Communists found out who he was they treated him and saved him, temporarily, from death. He was in the hospital at Alexandrovsk and begged his comrades to find a way of rescuing him. He was tortured atrociously. They tried to make him renounce Makhnovism and sign a paper to that effect. He scornfully repulsed their offers, although he was so weak that he could hardly talk. Because of this refusal, he might have been shot at any moment. But I could not find out whether he was or not.

"During this time, I myself made a raid across the Dnieper towards Nikolaiev; then I recrossed the Dnieper above Perekop and went towards our region, where I hoped to meet some of our detachments. But the Communist command had prepared an ambush for me near Melitopol. It was impossible either to advance or to recross the Dnieper, since the melting of the snow had begun and the river was covered with floating cakes of ice. We had to fight, which meant that I must get back into the saddle and direct operations myself.[2]

"A section of the enemy troops were skilfully turned and eluded by our men, while I forced the others to keep on the alert for a whole 24 hours, harassing them with our patrols. During this time, I managed to make a forced march of sixty versts, to

[1]The reader will recall that this was the time of the Kronstadt revolt. It is incorrectly supposed that the Bolsheviks claimed that Makhno participated indirectly in that movement.

[2]As we have said, Makhno had been wounded by a bullet that fractured his ankle, and he therefore mounted a horse only in cases of extreme necessity.

overcome—at dawn on the 8th March—a third Bolshevik army, camped on the shores of Lake Molotchny, and to get to the open space of the Vorkhny-Tomac region over the narrow promontory between this lake and the Sea of Azov. From there I sent Kurilenko into the Berdiansk-Melitopol region to direct the insurrectionary movement there. I myself went—with the intention of passing by Gulai-Polya—towards the department of Tchernigov, since peasant delegations had come from several of its districts to ask me to visit their region.

"In the course of this journey my troops—1,500 horsemen under Petrenko and two regiments of infantry—were halted and encircled by strong Bolshevik divisions. Again, I had to direct the counter-attack myself. Our efforts were successful, we beat the enemy thoroughly and took many prisoners, as well as arms, guns, ammunition and horses.

"But two days later we were attacked by fresh and very brave troops. I must tell you that these daily combats had accustomed our men to placing so little value on their lives that exploits of extraordinary and sublime heroism had become everyday occurrences. With a cry of 'Live free or die fighting!', the men would throw themselves into the midst of no matter what unit, overturning enemies much stronger than themselves and forcing them to flee.

"During our counter-attack [on this occasion], which was bold to the point of folly. I was struck with a bullet that entered my thigh and came out through the belly, near the appendix. I fell off my horse, and this made our counter-attack fail and forced us to retreat, the spirit of our troops having been broken by the cry of one of our men, no doubt inexperienced in battle, 'Batko is killed!'

"They carried me for a dozen versts in a sort of cart, before dressing my wound, and I lost a great deal of blood. I remained unconscious, under the guard of Leo Zinkovsky; this was March 14th. During the night of the 15th, I regained consciousness.

All the commanders of our army and the members of the staff, with Belach at their head, assembled at my bedside, asking me to sign an order to send detachments of a hundred or two hundred men to Kurilenko, Kojin and others, who were directing the insurrectionary movement in various regions. They wanted me to retire with one regiment to a relatively quiet place, until I could get back into the saddle. I signed the order, and I permitted Zabudko to form a flying column to act on its own in our region, without, however, losing touch with me. By the morning of the 16th March, all these detachments had already left, except for a small special unit that remained with me.

"At this moment, the 9th Red Cavalry Division fell upon us and forced us to strike camp. They pursued us for 13 hours and

over 180 versts. Finally, upon arriving at Sloboda, on the shore of the Sea of Azov, we were able to change horses and halt for five hours. At dawn on the 17th March, we resumed the march towards Novospassovka. But after 17 versts on the road we met a new and quite fresh force of enemy cavalry. They had been sent after Kurilenko, but, having lost sight of him, they fell upon us. After pursuing us for 25 versts (we were completely exhausted and really incapable of fighting) these horsemen threw themselves resolutely upon us.

"What was to be done? I was incapable, not only of getting into the saddle, but even of sitting up. I was lying in the bottom of the cart, and saw a terrible hand-to-hand battle—a regular hacking—take place about two hundred yards away from me. Our men died only for my sake, only because they would not abandon me. But, in the last resort, there was no way to safety, either for them or for me. The enemy was five or six times as strong, for fresh reserves were constantly arriving.

"All at once I saw our machine-gun tenders—the same guns that were with me in your time (there were five of them under the command of Micha from the village of Tchernigovka near Berdiansk)—coming up to my cart, and I heard the men say to me: 'Batko, your life is indispensable to the cause and to our peasant movement. That cause is dear to us. We are going to die soon, but our death will save you and those who will take faithful care of you. Don't forget to repeat our words to our parents.' One of them embraced me, then I could no longer see any of them near me. A moment later, Leo Zinkovsky carried me in his arms to the cart of a peasant who had passed nearby. I heard the machine-guns rattle and the bombs exploding in the distance. It was our gunners who were keeping the Bolsheviks from passing. We had time to travel three or four versts and cross a river. I was saved. But all our machine-gunners died there.

"Some time later we passed the place again, and the peasants of the village of Staroduvovka showed us the common grave where they had buried the machine-gunners. Dear friend, I still cannot keep back my tears when I think of those brave fighters, simple and honest peasants. Moreover, I must tell you that this episode seemed to cure me. On the evening of the same day, I got back into the saddle and left the region.

"During April I re-established contact with all the units of our troops, and sent those who were nearby to the Poltava region. During May, Kojin's and Kurilenko's units joined us and formed a body of 2,000 horsemen and several regiments of infantry. It was decided to march on Kharkov and chase out the big bosses of the Communist Party. But they were on their guard. They sent more than sixty armoured cars, several divisions of cavalry, and a

swarm of infantry to meet me. The fight with these troops lasted for weeks.

"A month later, Comrade Stchouss was killed in battle, in the same Poltava region. He was then chief-of-staff for Zabudko's group. He had done his duty valiantly. And a month after that it was Kurilenko's turn. He covered the march of our troops along the railway tracks, took personal charge of stationing the units, and was always in the leading squad. One day, he was surprised by Budenny's horsemen and perished in the fight.

"On May 18th, Budenny's horsemen were on the march from the Ekaterinoslav region towards the Don, to put down a peasant insurrection at the head of which were our comrades Brova and Maslak (who had been chief of Budenny's First Brigade and had joined us with all his men).

"Our group was formed of several detachments united under the command of Petrenko-Platonoff. The main staff and I formed part of the group. This day it was fifteen or twenty versts from the road followed by Budenny's army. Knowing, among other things, that I was always near this group, Budenny was tempted by the short distance that separated us from him. He ordered the chief of the armoured car unit, which was supposed to participate in suppressing the Don peasants, to send out 16 cars and blockade the village of Novogrigorievka. As for Budenny himself, he marched across the fields at the head of a part of the 19th Cavalry Division (formerly the Internal Service Division) in the direction of Novogrigorievka. He arrived there before the armoured cars, which were forced to avoid ravines, seek out fords and post sentries. The vigilance of our scouts put us in touch with all these movements, and allowed us to take precautions. At the moment when Budenny came in sight of our camp we threw ourselves upon him.

"Budenny, who was proudly galloping in the first rank, immediately turned tail. The disgraceful coward fled, abandoning his comrades. The combat that developed was a regular nightmare. The soldiers of the Red Army who were sent against us belonged to the troops who had remained until then in Central Russia. They had 'insured internal order'. They did not know us; they had been told that we were common bandits and made it a point of honour not to retreat before criminals. As for the insurgents, they felt in the right and were firmly resolved to conquer and disarm the enemy. This combat was the fiercest of all we had to fight, either before or after. It ended in a complete defeat for Budenny's troops, which led to the disintegration of his army and the desertion of many of his soldiers.

"Then I formed a unit of former Siberians, and sent them, armed and equipped with necessities, to Siberia under the command of Comrade Glasunoff. At the beginning of August, 1921, we

learnt from the Bolsheviks' papers that this unit had made its appearance in the Samara region. Then no more was said of it.

"During the whole summer of 1921 we did not cease fighting. The extreme drought of that season and the consequent bad harvests in the departments of Ekaterinoslav, Tauride and parts of Kherson and Poltava, as well as the Don region, forced us to move, in one direction, towards the Kuban and below Tzaritsin and Saratov, and, in the other, towards Kiev and Tchernigov. In the latter place, the struggle was lead by Comrade Kojin. When we met again, he gave me a bundle of resolutions taken by the peasants of Tchernigov, declaring that they wanted to support us completely in our struggle. As for me, I made a raid across the Volga, with the units of Comrades Zabudko and Petrenko; then I withdrew across the Don, meeting on the way several of our units which I combined and to which I added Vdovitchenko's old group from Azov.

"At the beginning of August, 1921, it was decided that, in view of the severity of my wounds, I would leave for abroad, with some of our commanders, to undergo a thorough treatment. It was about the same time that our best commanders—Kojin, Petrenko and Zabudko—were seriously wounded. On August 13th, accompanied by a hundred horsemen, I set out in the direction of the Dnieper and, on the morning of the 16th, we crossed the river between Orlik and Krementchug with the help of 17 fishing boats. On this day I was wounded six times, but always lightly. On the way we met several of our units, and explained to them the reasons for our departure for abroad. They all said the same thing: 'Go and get well, Batko, and then come back and save us.'

"On August 19th, we came upon the 7th Cavalry Division of the Red Army, camped along the Ingulets river, twelve versts from Bobrinetz. To go back meant trouble, since we had been seen by a cavalry regiment on our right which was advancing to cut off our retreat. I therefore asked Zinkovsky to put me on horseback. In an instant, with drawn sabres and loud cheers, we hurled ourselves on the Division's machine-guns, which were massed in a village. We managed to capture thirteen Maxim guns and three Lewis guns. Then we prepared to continue our journey. But as soon as we had captured the machine-guns, the whole division attacked us. We were caught in a mousetrap. But, without losing courage, we attacked and beat the 38th Regiment and the Division. Having cut a passage for ourselves, we rode 110 versts without stopping, defending ourselves ceaselessly from the furious attacks of all these troops. We finally escaped, but only after having lost seventeen of our best comrades.

"On August 22nd, they had to take care of me again; a bullet struck me in the neck and came out of the right cheek. Once again

I was lying in the bottom of a cart. On the 26th, we were obliged to fight a new battle with the Reds. We lost our best comrades and fighters, Petrenko-Platonoff and Ivanuk. I was compelled to alter our itinerary for the last time, and on August 28th, I crossed the Dniester. Here I am abroad . . ."

Thus, at the end of 1921, ended the great popular drama of the Ukraine, which represented a part of the history of the people, and not of parties, authorities or systems of oppression. For that reason it is not even suspected outside Russia,[1] all the official "supermen" and their acolytes having carefully concealed these facts. The historical truth would throw all these pygmies down from their pedestals of clay, just as the real popular revolution will one day throw into the dust all the power-wielding "supermen," whoever they may be. And then the men who know and dare will be able to write the true history of the people.

With its many Divisions, and without hesitating to use the most terrible means of repression and violence, the Communist government rapidly succeeded in wiping out or dispersing the last Makhnovist units wandering about the country. It also ended the resistance of the few remaining Petlurist troops in the south-west, as well as of numerous peasant detachments of a very varied nature, who were in a state of spontaneous revolt against the new lords or had taken to the hills to escape their implacable punishment.

Makhno and the handful of comrades in arms who had taken refuge with him abroad never saw again the country of their birth.

The whole of the Ukraine was subjugated by the Bolshevik dictatorship.

[1]Except in libertarian circles and among a few specialists.

CHAPTER 7

The Fate of Makhno and Some of His Comrades Epilogue

By way of an epilogue, certain details about the final repression and also about the personal fate of certain Makhnovist militants would be in place here.

The third and last war of the Bolsheviks against the Makhnovists was also, obviously, a war *against the entire Ukrainian peasantry.*

Their aim was not only to destroy the Insurrectionary Army, but also to subjugate *this entire rebellious mass,* removing from it any chance to take up arms again and give a new birth to the movement. Their aim was to root out *the very seeds* of rebellion.

The Red Divisions went systematically through all the villages of the insurgent region, exterminating large numbers of peasants, frequently on the basis of information provided by rich local peasants *(kulaks).*

Hundreds of peasants were shot in Gulyai-Polye, Novospasovka, Uspenovka, Malaya Tokmachka, Pologi and other large villages of the region.

In various places the Chekists, thirsting for murder, shot the women and children of the insurgents.

This "repressive" campaign was directed by Frunze, commander-in-chief of the Southern Front. "We have to finish off the Makhnovshchina by the count of two," he wrote in an order to the Army of the Southern Front before unleashing this action. And he carried himself as an old warrior, treating "this mob of *muzhiks"* in the manner of a conqueror, a new nobleman, sowing death and desolation around him.

And now we will give some brief notes on the personal fate of some of the participants in the Ukrainian popular movement.

Simon Karetnik was a peasant from Gulyai-Polye. One of the poorest in the village, he worked mostly as a farm labourer. He could only go to school for one year. An Anarchist from 1907, he participated in the movement from its first days. On various occasions he showed a remarkable talent for warfare. He was wounded many times in the fighting against Denikin. A member of the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents of the Ukraine, he was one of the best commanders of the Insurrectionary Army. In 1920 he often replaced Makhno as supreme commander of the army. He commanded the corps which was sent to the Crimea against Wrangel. After the latter's defeat, he was sent for by the Bolsheviks, ostensibly to attend a military council, but was treacherously seized en route and shot at Melitopol. He left a widow and several orphans.

Martchenko was the son of a family of poor peasants from Gulyai-Polye. His education was incomplete. An Anarchist since 1907 (with Makhno and Karetnik), he was one of the first insurgents of the Gulyai-Polye region. He was wounded several times in the combats against Denikin's troops. During the last two years of the insurrection, he commanded all the Makhnovist cavalry and was a member of the council of Revolutionary Insurgents. He was killed in January, 1921, near Poltava, in the course of a battle with the Reds. He left a widow.

Gregor Vassilevsky was the son of a poor peasant of Gulyai-Polye. He received an elementary education. An Anarchist before 1917, he participated in Makhnovism from its beginning. A personal friend of Makhno, he replaced him several times at the head of the army. He was killed in December, 1920, in the course of a battle against the Reds in the Kiev region. He left a widow and some orphans.

Boris Veretelnikoff was a peasant of Gulyai-Polye origin; later he became a foundry-hand in a local works, and afterwards at the Putilov factory in Petrograd. First a Social-Revolutionary, he became an Anarchist in 1918. A very gifted orator and organizer, he actively participated in all the phases of the Russian Revolution. In 1918, he returned to Gulyai-Polye and devoted himself mostly to propaganda. Later, he entered

the Insurrectionary Army, gave proof of great military qualities, and for some time performed the functions of chief of staff. In June, 1919, he marched at the head of a hastily formed unit to try and defend Gulyai-Polye against the superior forces of Denikin. Totally encircled, he fought to the end beside his comrades and perished with his whole unit. He left a widow and orphans.

Peter Gavrilenko was a Gulyai-Polye peasant, an Anarchist since the 1905 Revolution, and one of the most active militants of Makhnovism. He played a part of the highest importance, as commander of the Third Corps, in the defeat of the Denikinist troops in June, 1919. In 1921, he performed the functions of chief of staff of the Crimean Army. After Wrangel's destruction, he was treacherously seized by the Bolsheviks, like Karetnik, and shot at Melitopol.

Basil Kurilenko was a peasant from Novospasovka who received an elementary education. An Anarchist from the beginning of the revolution, a talented popular propagandist, a militant of the highest moral quality, he also revealed himself to be one of the best commanders of the Insurrectionary Army. Wounded many times, he won several victories over Denikin's troops. He was killed in a skirmish with the Reds in the summer of 1921 and left a widow.

Victor Belach was a peasant from Novospasovka, who received an elementary education. He was an Anarchist, and up to 1919 he commanded a Makhnovist regiment. A very skilful strategist, he was later chief of staff of the Insurrectionary Army and drew up several remarkable plans of battle. In 1921, he fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks. His fate is unknown to us.

Vdovitchenko was an Anarchist peasant from Novospasovka, who received an elementary education. One of the most active participants in the revolutionary insurrection, he commanded the special unit of the Makhnovist troops. He played a considerable part in the defeat of Denikin's forces at Peregonovka, in September, 1919. In 1921, taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks, he disdainfully turned down their proposal to transfer to their service. His fate is unknown to us.

Peter Rybin (Zonoff) was a lathe worker, originally from the province of Orel. A revolutionist since 1905, he emigrated to America, where he took an active part in the exiled Russian revolutionary movement. In 1917 he returned to Russia, established himself in Ekaterinoslav, and accomplished considerable popular work in the field of reorganizing industry and transport. He first worked with the Bolsheviks as a professional specialist, but in 1920 he felt it was impossible to continue this collaboration, the activities of the Bolsheviks, in his view, running counter to the real interests of the workers and peasants. In the autumn of 1920 he joined the Makhnovist movement and devoted all his strength and knowledge to it. In 1921 he was arrested at Kharkov by the Cheka and shot. His comrade and friend, Dvigomiroff, who also returned from America and worked as a propagandist among the peasants of the Tchernigov region, was treacherously seized and shot around the same time.

Kalachnikoff was the son of a worker who received some education and became a second lieutenant in the Tsarist army before the revolution. In 1917, he became secretary of the Anarchist group at Gulyai-Polye. Later he entered the Insurrectionary Army and became one of its most eminent commanders. He was principal organizer of the uprising of Red troops at Novy-Bug in 1919, when the Makhnovist regiments, temporarily incorporated into the Bolshevik Army, were called to rejoin the Insurrectionary Army and brought several Red regiments with them. He led all these troops into the insurgent region. He was killed in 1920 in combat with the Reds. He left a widow and an orphan.

Mikhaleff-Pavlenko was the son of a peasant from Central Russia. In 1917 he was a member of an Anarchist group in Petrograd, and arrived in Gulyai-Polye at the beginning of 1919. Possessing a good professional education, he organized and commanded the engineering troops of the Insurrectionary Army. On the 11th and 12th of June, 1919, while serving on an armoured train which was engaged in the fight against Denikin's troops, he was treacherously seized, with his comrade, Burbyga, by the order of Voroshilov (who commanded the Fourteenth Bolshevik Army) and was executed on June 17th at Kharkov.

Makeeff was a worker of Ivanovo-Voznessensk, near Moscow, and a member of the Anarchist group in that city. At the end of April 1919 he arrived at Gulyai-Polye with thirty-five comrades. He first devoted himself to propaganda and later he entered the Insurrectionary Army. He was elected a member of the staff and was killed in November, 1919, fighting the Denikinists.

Stchuss was a poor peasant from the village of Bolchaia-Mikhailovka, who served in the Tsarist navy as a seaman. In the beginning of the Revolution he became one of the first and most active insurgents of the southern Ukraine. With a group of partisans, he carried on a fierce struggle against the Austro-German troops and those of the Hetman Skoropadsky. Later he joined the Insurrectionary Army and occupied various important posts. He was mortally wounded in June, 1921, in the course of a battle with the Bolshevik troops.

Isador Luty was one of the poorest peasants of Gulyai-Polye. He worked as a house-painter. An Anarchist and an intimate friend of Makhno, he took part in the insurrection from its beginning. He was killed in the battle of Peregonovka against the Denikinists in September, 1919.

Thomas Kojin was a revolutionary peasant, and, as a remarkable commander of the machine-gun section of the Insurrectionary Army, he played a part of the first importance in all the defeats inflicted on Denikin and Wrangel. He was seriously wounded during a battle with the Reds in 1921. His subsequent fate is unknown to us.

The brothers **John** and **Alexander Lepetchenko** were Anarchist peasants from Gulyai-Polye. They were among the first insurgents against the Hetman Skoropadsky and participated actively in all the fighting of the Makhnovist army. Alexander Lepetchenko was seized and shot by the Bolsheviks at Gulyai-Polye in the spring of 1920. The fate of his brother is unknown to us.

Sereguin was a peasant and an Anarchist since 1917. He took part in the insurrection from the beginning and was for most of the time chief of the supply section of the Makhnovist army. We do not know what became of him.

Taranovsky.

Nestor Makhno's brothers, **Gregor** and **Savva**, both participated actively in the insurrection. Gregor was killed during the fighting against Denikin in September, 1919; Savva, the eldest son of the family, was seized by the Bolsheviks at Gulyai-Polye, not in the course of a battle, but in his house, and shot.

Other Makhnovists we should mention briefly are: **Budanov**, anarchist worker (fate unknown), **Tchernoknijny**, schoolteacher (fate unknown), the **Tchuvenko** brothers, workers (fate unknown), **Serada**, peasant (seriously wounded in a battle against Wrangel and hospitalized by the Bolsheviks before their break with Makhno, he was shot by them under particularly odious circumstances, after the break in March, 1921); **Garkucha** (killed in 1920); **Koliada** (fate unknown); **Klein** (fate unknown); **Dermendji** (fate unknown); **Pravda** (fate unknown); **Bondaretz** (killed in 1920); **Brova** (killed); **Zabudko** (killed); **Petrenko** (killed); **Maslak** (fate unknown); **Troian** (killed); **Golik** (fate unknown); **Tcheredniakov** (shot); **Dotzenko** (fate unknown); **Koval** (fate unknown); **Parkomenko** (killed); **Ivanuk** (killed); **Taranovsky** (killed); **Popoff** (shot); **Domachenko** (fate unknown); **Tykhenko** (fate unknown); **Buryma** (fate unknown), **Tchumak**, **Krat**, **Kogan** and so many others whose names escape us.

All these men, like the thousands of anonymous combatants, came from the lowest levels of the working population; all of them revealed themselves at the moment of revolutionary action and served the true cause of the workers with all their strength and until their last breath. Outside this cause, they had nothing in life. Their personal existence, and almost always their families and their meagre possessions as well, were destroyed. It is necessary to have the presumption, the insolence, the baseness of the Bolsheviks—those *parvenus* of the ignoble race of "statesmen"—to describe this sublime popular revolutionary movement as a *"kulak* uprising" and "banditry."

We should mention yet another individual case, one which is heinous to us.

Bogush was a Russian anarchist who had emigrated to America. He returned to Russia in 1921, after he was ex-

pelled from the United States together with other emigrants.[1]

At the time of the agreement between the Makhnovists and the Bolsheviks, Bogush was in Kharkov. Having heard a great deal about the legendary Gulyai-Polye, he had wanted to study the Makhnovshchina on the spot. Unfortunately, he was only able to see *free* Gulyai-Polye for a few hours. Immediately after the rupture, he returned to Kharkov. There he was arrested by the order of the Cheka, and was shot in March, 1921.

This execution can only have one explanation: the Bolsheviks did not want to leave alive a single person who had connections abroad, who knew the truth of their aggression against the Makhnovists, and who could have exposed it outside of Russia.

As for **Nestor Makhno**: he arrived in Rumania in August, 1921, where he and his comrades were interned. Makhno managed to escape to Poland. There he was arrested and tried for pretended crimes committed in the Ukraine against the interests of Poland, and was acquitted. He went on to Danzig, and was again imprisoned. He managed to escape once again, with the help of comrades, and finally settled in Paris.

Sick, and suffering bitterly from his many wounds, ignorant of the country's language and adapting himself with difficulty to surroundings which were so different from those he was accustomed to, he led in Paris a life which was as difficult materially as it was psychologically. His existence abroad was little more than a long and miserable agony, against which he was powerless to struggle. His friends helped him support the weight of these sad years of decline.

At times he attempted a certain activity; in particular, he started a history of his struggles and of the revolution in the Ukraine. But he could not finish it; it terminated at the end of 1918. Three volumes appeared, the first (in Russian and French) while the author was still alive, and the second and

[1]He arrived in Russia at the same time as Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, two well-known old anarchists whom we mentioned in the chapter on Kronstadt.

third (in Russian only) after his death.

His health declined rapidly. Admitted to the Tenon Hospital, he died there in July, 1935. He was cremated at Père-Lachaise Crematorium, where one can still see the urn containing his ashes. He left a widow and a daughter.

BEFORE ENDING, it is necessary finally to refute the slanders—Bolshevik and otherwise—by which it has been sought to discredit the Makhnovist movement and to sully the reputation of the Insurrectionary Army and of Makhno himself. It is also necessary to examine more closely the *real* weaknesses and defects of Makhnovism and of those who animated and guided it.

We have spoken already of the Bolshevik attempts to represent the Makhnovist movement as a manifestation of banditry and Makhno himself as a bandit on a large scale. The information that has been given will, I hope, allow the reader to judge the truth of these slanders for himself, and I would not stress this point any further if it were not necessary to examine certain facts which have given this version a semblance of veracity and which have been utilised very skilfully by the Bolsheviks.

Despite its very widespread nature, the Makhnovist movement remained enclosed within its own borders and isolated from the rest of the world. Being a movement which arose from the popular masses themselves, it remained untouched by any manifestation of showmanship, publicity, or so-called glory. It accomplished no political action and gave rise to no directing élite. As a genuine, concrete and living movement, rather than a compound of red tape and the exploits of "genial leaders", it had neither the time nor the possibility, nor even the need, to assemble documents that would preserve its ideas and acts "for posterity".

Surrounded by implacable enemies on all sides, attacked without truce or quarter by the ruling party, submerged by the deafening voices of "statesmen" and their henchmen, and losing in the struggle at least nine-tenths of its best militants, this movement was doomed to remain in the shadows. And so it is not easy to uncover its fundamental nature. Just as thousands of modest heroes of all revolutionary periods remain for ever unknown, so it is almost inevitable that the Makhnovist movement

should remain a scarcely known epic of the workers. It goes without saying that the Bolsheviks took advantage of these circumstances and the ignorance which sprang from them to say what they wanted about the movement.

In this connection another important point must be considered. During the confused and chaotic struggles which completely disorganised the life of the Ukraine between 1917 and 1921, there were numerous armed formations in operation, composed of unclassed and disoriented elements and led by adventurers, looters and bandits. These formations did not hesitate to make use of camouflage, and their "partisans" frequently wore a black ribbon and called themselves "Makhnovists". Naturally, this gave rise to many regrettable confusions.

These groups had nothing in common with the Makhnovist movement, which fought and destroyed them. The Bolsheviks, needless to say, were well aware of the difference between the Insurrectionary Army and these bands without faith or morals. But the confusions served their purpose admirably, and as "experienced statesmen", they exploited it for their own ends.

Here we should emphasise that the Makhnovists were extremely concerned for the good reputation of their army. Carefully, but in a very friendly way, they watched the conduct of each combatant, and behaved correctly towards the general population. Elements who could not rise to the general mental and normal level were not retained within the ranks.

This is illustrated by an episode which took place in the Insurrectionary Army after the defeat of the adventurer Grigoriev in the summer of 1919. This former Tsarist officer managed to involve several thousand deluded young Ukrainian peasants in a fairly extensive uprising against the Bolsheviks—an uprising that was reactionary, pogromist and partly inspired by a simple desire for loot. In July, 1919, at the village of Sentova, Makhno and his friends unmasked Grigoriev before a public meeting to which they had invited him. Brutal, ignorant and not at all aware of the mentality of the Makhnovists, he spoke first and delivered a reactionary speech. Makhno replied in such a way that Grigoriev saw that he was lost and tried to use his weapons. In the course of a short fight he and his bodyguard were beaten.

It was decided that Grigoriev's young peasants, of whom the

overwhelming majority were, in spite of everything, imbued with a revolutionary spirit that had been abused by their chief, could enter the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army if they wished. But nearly all of these recruits had to be dismissed later on. Having acquired bad habits in Grigoriev's detachments, these soldiers could not rise to the moral level of the Makhnovist combatants. To be sure, the latter thought that in time they could have educated them, but in the existing conditions they could not concern themselves with such matters, and so, in order not to prejudice the good name of the Insurrectionary Army, they discharged them.

One especially shameful slander has been perpetrated by many writers of all shades of opinion against the Makhnovist movement in particular and Makhno personally. Some have spread it intentionally, but the majority have repeated it without bothering to check the sources or examine the facts closely.

It is alleged that the Makhnovists, and Makhno, were impregnated with anti-semitic feeling, that they pursued and massacred the Jews, that they supported and even organised pogroms. The more prudent reproach Makhno with having been a "secret" anti-semite, with having tolerated and closed his eyes to the acts committed by his bands, even if he did not sympathise with them.

We could cover dozens of pages with extensive and irrefutable proofs of the falseness of these assertions. We could mention articles and proclamations by Makhno and the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents denouncing anti-semitism. We could tell of spontaneous acts directed by Makhno himself and other insurgents against the slightest manifestation of the anti-semitic spirit on the part of a few isolated and misguided unfortunates in the army and the population. In such cases Makhno did not hesitate to react personally and violently.

One of the reasons for the execution of Grigoriev by the Makhnovists was his anti-semitism and the immense pogrom he organised at Elizabethgrad, which cost the lives of nearly three thousand persons. And the main cause of the dismissal of those of his partisans who had joined the Insurrectionary Army was the anti-semitic spirit which their former chief had managed to instil into them.

We could cite a whole series of similar facts, but we do not

find it necessary to enlarge too much on this subject, and will content ourselves with mentioning briefly the following essential facts:

1. A fairly important part in the Makhnovist Army was played by revolutionists of Jewish origin.

2. Several members of the Education and Propaganda Commission were Jewish.

3. Besides many Jewish combatants in various units of the army, there was a battery composed entirely of Jewish artillerymen and a Jewish infantry unit.

4. Jewish colonies in the Ukraine furnished many volunteers to the Insurrectionary Army.

5. In general the Jewish population, which was very numerous in the Ukraine, took an active part in all the activities of the movement. The Jewish agricultural colonies which were scattered throughout the districts of Mariupol, Berdiansk, Alexandrovsk, etc., participated in the regional assemblies of workers, peasants and partisans; they sent their delegates to the regional Revolutionary Military Council.

6. Rich and reactionary Jews certainly had to suffer from the Makhnovist army, not as Jews, but just in the same way as non-Jewish counter-revolutionaries.

Several years ago, in Paris, I had the occasion to interview the eminent Jewish writer and historian, M. Tcherikover, about the question of the Makhnovists and anti-Semitism. I reproduce his statement below.

M. Tcherikover is neither a revolutionary nor an Anarchist. He is simply a scrupulous, meticulous and objective historian. For years he has specialized in research on the persecutions of the Jews in Russia. He has published several basic and extraordinarily well-documented and precise works on this subject. He has received documents of every kind from all parts of the world. He has heard hundreds of depositions, both official and private, and he has checked all the facts rigorously before using them.

Here, verbatim, is what he replied to my question whether he knew anything precise about the attitude of the Makhnovist Army and Makhno himself with regard to the Jewish population:

"I have concerned myself repeatedly with this question," he told me. "Here are my conclusions, with the usual reservations in case more exact testimony should reach me in the future. An army is always an army, and armies inevitably commit culpable and reprehensible acts, for it is materially impossible to control and supervise every individual making up these masses of men who are taken away from their healthy and normal lives, who are thrown into an existence and into surroundings which release their evil impulses, and who are authorized to use violence, very often with impunity. You certainly know this as well as I do. The Makhnovist army was no exception to this rule. It also committed some reprehensible acts now and then. But I am glad to be able to say with certainty that, on the whole, the behaviour of Makhno's army cannot be compared with that of the other armies which were operating in Russia during the events 1917-21. Two facts I can certify absolutely explicitly.

"1. It is undeniable that, of all these armies, including the Red Army, the Makhnovists behaved best with regard to the civil population in general and the Jewish population in particular. I have numerous testimonies to this. The proportion of *justified* complaints against the Makhnovist army, in comparison with the others, is negligible.

"2. Do not let us speak of pogroms alleged to have been organized by Makhno himself. This is a slander or an error. Nothing of the sort occurred. As for the Makhnovist Army, I have had hints and precise denunciations on this subject. But, up to the present, every time I have tried to check the facts, I have been obliged to declare that on the day in question no Makhnovist unit could have been at the place indicated, the whole army being far away from there. Upon examining the evidence closely, I established this fact, every time, with absolute certainty, at the place and on the date of the pogrom, no *Makhnovist* unit was operating or even located in the vicinity. *Not once* have I been able to prove the presence of a Makhnovist unit at the place where a pogrom against the Jews took place. Consequently, the pogroms in question could not have been the work of the Makhnovists."

This testimony, which is impartial and precise, is one of the first importance. It confirms, among other things, a fact

we have already mentioned, the presence of bands, committing all kinds of misdeeds and not disdaining the profits to be gained from a pogrom against the Jews, who covered themselves with the name of "Makhnovist". Only a scrupulous examination can sort out the confusion that occurred. There is no doubt that, in certain cases, the population itself was mistaken.

There is one further fact of which the reader should never lose sight. The Makhnovist movement was far from being the only revolutionary movement of the masses in the Ukraine. It was merely the most important and conscious of these movements, the most deeply popular and revolutionary. Other movements of the same type, less widespread, less clearly-defined and less well-organised were constantly arising in various places until the day when the last cry of freedom was stifled by the Bolsheviks. Such, for example, was the movement of the "Greens" which the foreign press occasionally mentioned and which was frequently confused with the Makhnovist movement. Less conscious of their real task than the Gulai-Polya insurgents, the combatants of these various formations frequently committed regrettable errors and excesses, and very often the Makhnovist movement was held responsible for such misconduct. Among other things, the Bolsheviks reproached the Makhnovists for not having reduced these various "chaotic bands" to a single movement, for not having organised them, etc. This reproach is a sample of Bolshevik hypocrisy, for what really bothered the Soviet government most was precisely the possibility that all the popular revolutionary forces of the Ukraine might be assembled under the aegis of the Makhnovist movement. Therefore, the Bolsheviks did their best to prevent this, and for them to reproach the Makhnovists for not achieving the unification was like reproaching someone for not being able to walk after you have tied his feet. [If they had been allowed to do so] the Makhnovists would certainly have ended by uniting under their standard all the popular revolutionary movements of the country.

The Makhnovist insurgents, and the population of the insurgent region as a whole, paid no attention to the nationality of the workers. From the beginning, the movement known as *Makhnovitchina* embraced the impoverished masses of all the nationalities inhabiting the Ukraine. The majority naturally consisted of

peasants of Ukrainian nationality, but six per cent. or thereabouts were of Great Russian origin and there were also smaller proportions of Greeks, Jews, etc.

"Peasants, workers and partisans," said a Makhnovist proclamation in May, 1919, "you know that the workers of all nationalities—Russians, Jews, Poles, Germans, Armenians, etc.—are equally imprisoned in the abyss of poverty. You know how many honest and valiant revolutionary Jewish militants have given their lives in the course of the struggle for liberty. The revolution, and the honour of the workers, oblige us all to declare as loudly as possible that we make war on the same enemies, on Capital and the principle of Authority, which oppress all workers equally, whether they be of Russian, Polish, Jewish or any other nationality. We must proclaim everywhere that our enemies are the exploiters of all nationalities—the Russian manufacturer, the German iron magnate, the Jewish banker, the Polish aristocrat . . . The bourgeoisie of all countries and all nationalities is united in a bitter struggle against the revolution, against the labouring masses of the whole world and of all nationalities."

Formed by the exploited, and merged into a single mass by the natural union of the workers, the Makhnovist movement was impregnated from the beginning with a deep feeling of fraternity for all peoples. Not for an instant did it appeal to national or "patriotic" sentiments. The whole struggle of the Makhnovists against the Bolsheviks was conducted solely in the name of the rights and interests of Labour. National prejudice had no hold on the Makhnovist movement. Nobody was interested in the nationality of this or that combatant or disturbed by it. It must also be remembered that the true revolution fundamentally changes individuals and masses alike. If only the masses effectively achieve that revolution for themselves, if only their freedom of thought and action remain intact, if only no force succeeds in obstructing their path, the enthusiasm of the people in revolt can be unlimited. And it is then that one sees with what simplicity, with what ease, this natural enthusiasm carries away all prejudices, all artificial notions, all the ghosts that have accumulated for thousands of years—national ghosts, religious scarecrows, authoritarian chimeras.

The final accusation that the Bolsheviks levelled against Makhno was that, if he was not a bandit, he was at least an adventurer like Grigoriev, though more intelligent, cunning and

polished than the latter. They claimed that Makhno pursued personal goals within the movement, under the guise of anarchist ideology, that he acted like a "little prince", disregarding all the committees, commissions and councils, that he in fact exercised a complete personal dictatorship, by which the idealistic militants who participated in the movement allowed themselves—wittingly or unwittingly—to be fooled. It was further stated that he assembled around him a camarilla of "commanders" who were allowed to commit secret and disgraceful acts of violence, debauchery and depravity, and that he himself condoned these acts and participated in them, laughing up his sleeve at the ideologues, whom, as well as their ideas, he despised and mocked.

Here we touch on an admittedly delicate question. For here also there are facts which gave these accusations a semblance of truth, and of which the Bolsheviks took advantage. These facts were connected with certain real faults and weaknesses of which a closer examination is needed for the sake of the libertarian cause itself.

In a close examination of the Makhnovist movement, it is necessary to distinguish three categories of faults. First come those of a general nature, which did not depend on the will of the participants and for which nobody can be blamed. The most important of these were (i) the almost perpetual necessity of fighting and of being on the move, without being able to settle down anywhere, or, for that very reason, to consecrate themselves to sustained positive work; (ii) the existence of an army, which inevitably became more and more professional and permanent in character; (iii) the lack of a vigorous and organised workers' movement to support the insurrection; (iv) the inadequacy of the intellectual forces in the service of the movement.

Next come certain faults of individuals, for which again they cannot be blamed—the lack of education, the inadequacy of theoretical and historical knowledge and of a broad view of society as a whole on the part of the animators of the movement. An unfortunate result of these inadequacies was the excessively trusting attitude of the Makhnovists towards the Communist state and its actions.

Last come the personal shortcomings of Makhno and his immediate friends, which were reprehensible in so far as they could

have been avoided.

As for the first two categories, there is not much point, after what we have already said, in our enlarging to any great extent upon them, except for one circumstance that deserves special attention—the prolonged existence of an army.

Any army, of whatever kind, is an evil, and even a free and popular army, composed of volunteers and dedicated to the defence of a noble cause, is by its very nature a danger. Once it becomes permanent, it inevitably detaches itself from the people and the world of labour. Its members lose the inclination and the ability to lead a healthy working life. With an imperceptible and therefore all the more dangerous gradualness, it becomes a collection of idlers who acquire anti-social, authoritarian and even dictatorial leanings, who acquire also a taste for violence as a thing in itself, for the use of brute force even in cases where recourse to such means is contrary to the very cause it purports to defend.

These defects develop most strongly among the leaders, but the rank-and-file is ever more disposed to follow their example, almost without thinking, even when they are in the wrong. It is in this way that all armies which have become permanent have tended in the last resort to become instruments of injustice and oppression. They end by forgetting their original purposes and come to feel that they are ends in themselves.

Did Makhno and the other initiators and organisers of the insurrectionary movement and its army possess these qualities? Did they rise above all corruption? I regret to say that the moral qualities of Makhno himself and of many of his friends and collaborators were not entirely equal to the strains that were imposed upon them.

During my stay with the Insurrectionary Army, I often heard it said that certain commanders—Kurilenko was especially mentioned—were morally better equipped than Makhno to inspire and guide the movement as a whole. It was sometimes added that even in military qualities Kurilenko was Makhno's equal, and that he certainly surpassed him in the breadth of his views. When I asked why, in this case, Makhno remained where he was, the reply was that, for certain traits of his character, Makhno was better liked and more highly esteemed by the mass of the army. They knew him better, they had been used to him for a long time

and he enjoyed their absolute confidence, which was important to the movement. He was simpler, bolder, more comradely and more of a peasant.

It is certainly true that Makhno and several of his friends were remiss in certain moral duties which in their position they should have fulfilled without the least defection, and it is here that we touch on those weaknesses of the movement and those personal defects of its initiators which gave the Bolshevik assertions a semblance of veracity and which greatly damaged both the movement itself and its reputation.

Makhnovism was produced and led by men, and, like all human works, it has not only its light, but also its shadows. It is indispensable that we should look into these shadows, not only to satisfy our desire for truth and impartiality, but also to reach a better understanding of the movement as a whole and to draw from its experiences the necessary lessons and conclusions.

First, I will quote what Peter Archinov said on the subject:

"Makhno's personality," he tells us, "contained many superior characteristics—spirit, will, hardihood, energy and activity. The traits, taken together, created an imposing impression, and made him remarkable even among revolutionists. At the same time, he lacked the theoretical knowledge needed to understand politics and history. That is why he frequently could not reach the necessary revolutionary generalisations and conclusions—or did not even perceive their necessity.

"The vast movement of the revolutionary insurrection imperatively demanded that new social and revolutionary formulas should be found that would be adequate to its nature. By reason of his lack of theoretical training, Makhno was not always equal to this task, and in view of his position at the centre of the revolutionary insurrection, this defect had repercussions on the movement as a whole. We believe that if Makhno had possessed more extensive knowledge in the fields of history and the political and social sciences, the revolutionary insurrection would have recorded, instead of inevitable defeats, a series of victories which would have played an enormous and perhaps decisive role in the development of the Russian Revolution.

"Besides, Makhno possessed one characteristic that sometimes diminished his dominant qualities. At times a certain heedlessness took possession of him. Though full of energy and will, he occasionally showed, in times of exceptionally serious crisis, a frivolity that was incompatible with the degree of perspicacity

demanded by the gravity of the situation. To give one example, the results of the victory in the Autumn of 1919 over Denikin's counter-revolution were not sufficiently exploited in the direction of developing a pan-Ukrainian insurrection, although the moment was particularly favourable for such a task. The reason for this was a certain intoxication of victory, as well as a strong, and erroneous, sense of security and a measure of inattentiveness; the guides of the insurrection with Makhno at their head, installed themselves in the liberated region without guarding sufficiently against either the persistence of the White danger or the peril of Bolshevism, which was descending from the North."

These criticisms are perfectly true. But they are not all that needs to be said, and we must complete what Archinov has barely hinted in mentioning Makhno's "heedlessness". For this heedlessness was itself very often the consequence of a deeper weakness, which at times brought Makhno to a state of moral collapse that undoubtedly affected the movement.

The paradox of Makhno's character was that, despite his superior power of will and character, he was never strong enough to resist certain temptations, and with him he dragged down several of his friends and collaborators. Sometimes, however, it was the latter who dragged him down, and he was unable to oppose them resolutely.

His greatest fault was certainly the abuse of alcohol. He became addicted gradually, but at certain periods his condition was disgraceful in its manifestations. The effects of his drunkenness were primarily in the moral field. Physically he did not change, but under the influence of alcohol he became over-excited, mischievous, unjust, intractable and violent. Often, during my stay with the army, I left him in despair, unable to get anything reasonable out of him even when matters of some importance were concerned, because of his abnormal condition. (At certain periods, indeed, it became almost his "normal" condition!)

The second fault of Makhno and of many of his intimates—both commanders and others—was their behaviour towards women. Especially when drunk, these men let themselves indulge in shameful and even odious activities, going as far as orgies in which certain women were forced to participate. It goes without saying that these acts of debauchery produced a demoralising effect on those who knew about them, and Makhno's good name suffered from this.

Such moral misconduct led inevitably to other excesses and abuses. Under the influence of alcohol, Makhno became irresponsible in his actions; he lost control of himself. Then it was personal caprice, often supported by violence, that suddenly replaced his sense of revolutionary duty; it was the despotism, the absurd pranks, the dictatorial antics of a warrior chief that were strangely substituted for the calm reflection, perspicacity, personal dignity and self-control in his attitude to others and to the cause which a man like Makhno should never have abandoned.

The inevitable result of these disorders and aberrations was an excess of "warrior sentiment" which led to the formation of a kind of military clique or camarilla about Makhno. This clique sometimes made decisions and committed acts without taking account of the opinion of the Council or of other institutions. It lost its sense of proportion, showed contempt towards all those who were outside it, and detached itself more and more from the mass of the combatants and the working population.

To support my view, I will mention an episode from among several I witnessed. One evening, when the Council had complained of the misconduct of certain commanders, Makhno entered in the middle of a session. He was drunk, and extremely excited. He drew his revolver, pointed it at the gathering, and, waving it to and fro before the members of the assembly, insulted them grossly. After that he went out without listening to any explanation. Even if the complaint had been unfounded, his way of replying to it was itself deserving of even greater complaint. I could add other episodes of the same kind.

Yet, having avoided overemphasising the highlights of the Makhnovist movement, we should take care not to exaggerate the shadows. In the first place, as Archinov says: "Makhno's personality grew and developed with the revolution. Each year he became more profound and more conscious of his task. By 1921 he had gained considerably in depth of character, in comparison with the years of 1918 and 1919." Furthermore, the misconduct of Makhno and some of his friends was, on the whole, sporadic and largely compensated for by all their highly meritorious exploits. It could not be considered a "line of conduct"; it was nothing more than a series of digressions. It was

not—and this is important—a question of the calculated, permanent and rigid attitude of a government, which, regularly supported by coercive force, imposes itself permanently upon the whole community. In the general atmosphere of liberty, based on a vast and conscious popular movement, the evil could only be a localised wound, whose festering could not poison the whole organism.

In fact a serious resistance soon grew up against the deviations of Makhno and his "clique", both among the commanders themselves and among the mass of the insurgents. Repeatedly, Makhno was called to order and made to feel the gravity of his misconduct. It must be said to his credit that he usually paid attention and tried to improve himself.

"One should not forget," Peter Archinov rightly remarks, "the unfavourable conditions in which Makhno had lived from infancy, the environmental disadvantages he experienced from his first years, the almost complete lack of education of those who surrounded him, and, finally, the absence of experienced and enlightened help in his social and revolutionary struggle.

"What was most important was the general atmosphere of the movement. In the last analysis, it was neither Makhno nor the commanders who counted; it was the masses. They retained all their independence, all their freedom of opinion and action. One can be sure that, in this general atmosphere of a free movement, the activity of the masses would have ended by correcting the errors of the 'chiefs'.

"Precisely in order that this brake, this resistance to the deviations of individuals, this localisation of the evil may always be possible, the complete freedom of opinion and action of the masses should be and remain the most important, absolute and unalterable conquest of the Revolution.

"How many times, during my stay in the Ukraine, could I observe, in contrast to the culpable attitude of certain 'chiefs', the simple and healthy reaction of the masses, when they were still free! And how many times I reflected: 'It is not the chief, it is not the commander, it is not the professional revolutionary, it is not the *élite* that counts in a real revolution, it is the revolutionary mass. It is in them that truth and health reside. The role of the animator, of the real chief, of the real revolutionary, of the *élite*, is to aid the masses and remain worthy of the task."

In view of these considerations, there is no reason to magnify the weaknesses of the Makhnovist movement to the proportions they assume under the pens of the Bolsheviks. The latter

deliberately exaggerated and distorted the faults of any individual for the purpose of discrediting the whole movement. Yet the Bolshevik leaders have only to look at themselves!

Nevertheless, certain of the faults and inadequacies we have mentioned undoubtedly weakened the movement at the time. Who knows what might have been the turn of events, despite all the obstacles and difficulties, had the movement been guided from the beginning in a manner that was more far-sighted, broader in vision and, in a few words, more worthy of the task?

"The efforts of the Makhnovists in their struggle against Denikin were enormous," Archinov declares. "The heroism they showed during the last months was admired by everyone. In all the wide sweep of the liberated regions, they were the only ones to preserve the thunder of the revolutionary cause, they alone were the grave-diggers of the Denikinist counter-revolution. It was thus that the masses of the people understood events, both in the cities and in the country.

"But this very circumstance contributed to the development in many Makhnovists of the firm belief that they were from now on guaranteed against all provocation on the part of the Bolsheviks, that the Red Army which at the moment was coming down from the North, understood that the slanders of the Communist Party with regard to the Makhnovists were unfounded, that this army would not listen to a new fraud, a new provocation, that on the contrary it would make common cause with the Makhnovists when it met them face to face. Indeed, the optimism of some Makhnovists went as far as the belief that the Communist Party would probably not dare to organise a new outrage against the free people, since the Makhnovist tendency had manifestly been accepted by the broad masses of the country.

"The military and revolutionary activity of the Makhnovists was dominated by this state of mind. They confined themselves to occupying a part of the Dnieper and Donetz region. They did not seek to advance North and consolidate themselves there. They thought that when the two armies met, the policy to be adopted would by itself become apparent. This optimism did not correspond to the situation that existed in the Ukraine. And that is why the results were not those for which the Makhnovists hoped . . .

"It is true that, in the Autumn of 1919, the annihilation of Denikin's counter-revolution constituted one of the principal tasks of the Makhnovist movement and of the whole Russian Revolution. This task was performed entirely by the Makhnovists. But it did not constitute the whole of the mission which they had to fulfil during

this tragic period for the sake of the revolution. The country in revolt, liberated from Denikin's troops, urgently required an immediate organisation of defence over its whole territory. Without that defence, the country and all the revolutionary possibilities opened to it by the liquidation of Denikinism were every day in danger of being wiped out by the Statist armies of the Bolsheviks, which had been sent to the Ukraine in pursuit of Denikin's retreating troops . . .

"In any event, Bolshevism would never accept the free existence of a popular movement, like Makhnovism, based on the masses themselves. Whatever the opinion of these masses, this would not prevent Bolshevism from doing everything to strangle and destroy the movement. That is why the Makhnovists, who were at the heart of events and popular movements in the Ukraine, should have taken in advance all the steps necessary to be secure against such an eventuality . . .

"It is therefore incontestable that in the Autumn of 1919 one of the historic tasks imposed on Makhnovism by the course of events was the creation of a revolutionary army of sufficient strength to permit the people in revolt to defend their liberty, not only in an isolated and limited area, but in the whole territory of the Ukrainian insurrection. At the moment of the fierce struggle against Denikin, this would certainly have not been an easy task, but it was historically necessary and entirely possible, since the major part of the Ukraine was in the midst of revolution and was leaning towards Makhnovism. The units of insurgents who flocked to join the Makhnovists came not only from the southern part of the country, but also from the north (e.g. the troops of Bibik who occupied Poltava). Certain detachments of the Red Army, came from Central Russia, thirsting to fight for the social revolution under the banner of Makhnovism—among others, the fairly numerous troops who came from the department of Orel under the command of Ogarkoff. They arrived at Ekaterinoslav towards the end of October, having fought battles on the way against both the Bolshevik armies and those of Denikin.

"The standard of Makhnovism rose up spontaneously and floated over the whole Ukraine. It was only necessary to take the measures needed to organise the whole, to merge all the numerous armed formations which were wandering over the whole Ukraine into a single powerful popular and revolutionary army that could have mounted guard around the territory of the revolution. Such a force, defending the whole territory and not merely a narrow and limited region, would have been the most persuasive argument against the Bolsheviks, accustomed as they were to work and deal with force.

"However, the intoxication of the victories that had been won, plus a certain heedlessness, prevented the Makhnovists from creating a force of this sort at the opportune time. That is why, from the time the Bolsheviks entered the Ukraine, the Insurrectionary Army was obliged to withdraw into the limited area of Gulai-Polya. It was a serious military error; an error which the Bolsheviks were not slow in turning to their advantage and whose consequences fell heavily on the Makhnovists and with them on the whole revolution in the Ukraine." (*Op. cit.* pp. 253-9).

Without being obliged to concur with Archinov on all points, we must agree with him that, because of certain grave weaknesses, problems of capital importance were not envisaged and imperative tasks were not performed. Before I end this chapter, which I consider the most important and suggestive of my book, I want to address a few words to those who, by reason of their situation or for other reasons, are contemplating collaboration in the initial organisation of a popular movement in such a way as to give it animation and assistance. Let them not confine themselves to a simple reading of the epic of the Ukrainian masses. Let them reflect seriously on the weaknesses and errors of that popular revolution; there is no lack of lessons for them to learn.

Their task will be hard. Among other problems which must be solved now, among other difficulties which as far as possible should be surmounted and eliminated in advance, they must envisage the means of reconciling the need to defend the true revolution with that of avoiding the evils which an armed force engenders. Yes, let them reflect well, and to this end let them try to establish now the fundamental principles to guide their future action. Time is pressing. Their conclusions may be needed sooner than they think.

CHAPTER 8

Testament of the Makhnovshchina to the Workers of the World

I would conclude with a passage from the final pages of Peter Archinov's book, a passage with which I associate myself fully:

"The history just narrated is far from giving a picture of the movement in all its grandeur. We have merely traced—and that briefly—the story of a single current of this movement (the most important, it is true), arising from the Gulai-Polya region. This current formed part of a much greater whole . . .

"If we could have followed the movement in all the ramifications of Makhnovism throughout the whole Ukraine, if we could have traced the history of each of these lesser currents and then linked them together and illuminated them with a common light, we could have obtained a great tableau of a people, several million strong, in revolt, a people struggling under the standard of Makhnovism for the fundamental ideas of the real social revolution; true freedom and true equality. We hope that a more detailed and complex history of the Makhnovist movement will one day perform this task . . .

"Makhnovism is universal and immortal . . . Wherever the labouring masses do not let themselves be subjugated, wherever they cultivate the love of independence, wherever they concentrate and express their class will and spirit, they will always create their own popular social movements, they will act according to their own understanding. That is what constitutes the real essence of Makhnovism.

"The bloody tragedy of the Russian peasants and workers must not pass without leaving its trace on history. More than anything else, the practice of Socialism in Russia has demonstrated that the labouring classes have no friends, that they have only enemies who seek to take away the fruits of their toil. State Socialism has fully demonstrated that it also belongs among these enemies. This idea is being implanted, more firmly from year to year, in the consciousness of the masses of the people.

"*Proletarians of the whole world, look into the depths of your own beings, seek out the truth and realise it yourselves. You will find it nowhere else.* Such is the watchword bequeathed by Russian Makhnovism to the workers of the world."

APPENDIX I

Voline Meets Trotsky in April 1917

Daniel Guérin reprinted an extract from the unpublished conclusion of *The Unknown Revolution* in his essential anthology of anarchist texts, *No Gods, No Masters* (Ni Dieu Ni Maitre), and we include this autographical sketch here.[1] This translation first appeared in *News from Nowhere* (Canada, 1973) before being reprinted in *The Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review* 2 (1977).

In April 1917 I met Trotsky again. (We had known each other in Russia and later in France, from which we were both expelled in 1916.) We met in a print shop which specialised in printing the various publications of the Russian left. He was then editor of a daily Marxist paper *Novy Mir* (New World). As for me, I had been entrusted with editing the last numbers of *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labour), the weekly organ of the anarcho-syndicalist Union of Russian Workers, shortly before it was moved to Russia. I used to spend one night a week at the print shop while the paper was being prepared. That is how I happened to meet Trotsky on my first night there.

Naturally we spoke about the Revolution. Both of us were preparing to leave America in the near future to return home.

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1 Daniel Guérin, *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 476–77.

In the course of our conversation I said to Trotsky: "Truly I am absolutely sure that you, the Marxists of the left, will end up by seizing power in Russia. That is inevitable, because the Soviets, having been restored, will surely enter into conflict with the bourgeois government. The government will not be able to destroy them because all the workers of the country, both industrial workers and peasants, and also most of the army, will naturally put themselves on the side of the Soviets against the bourgeoisie and the government. And once the Soviets have the support of the people and the army, they will triumph in the struggle. And once they have won it will be you, the Marxists, who will inevitably be carried into power. Because the workers are seeking the revolution in its most advanced form. The syndicalists and anarchists are too weak in Russia to attract the attention of the workers rapidly by their ideas. So the masses will put their confidence in you, and you will become 'the masters of the country.' And then, look out anarchists! The conflict between you and us is unavoidable. You will begin to persecute us as soon as your power is consolidated. And you will finish by shooting us like partridges."

"Come, come, comrade," replied Trotsky. "You have a stubborn and incorrigible imagination. Do you think we are really divided? A mere question of method, which is quite secondary. Like us you are revolutionaries. Like you we are anarchists in the final analysis. The only difference is that you would like to establish your anarchism immediately without a preparatory transition, while we, the Marxists, do not believe it possible to 'leap' in one bound into the libertarian millennium. We anticipate a transitory epoch in the course of which the ground for an anarchist society will be cleared and ploughed with the help of the anti-bourgeois political powers: the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised by the proletarian party in power. In the end, it involves only a 'shade' of difference, nothing more. On the whole we are very close to one another. We are friends in arms. Remember now: we have a common enemy to fight. How can we think of fighting among ourselves? Moreover, I have no doubt that you will be quickly convinced of the necessity

of a temporary proletarian socialist dictatorship. I don't see any real reason for a war between you and us. We will surely march hand in hand. And then, even if we don't agree, you are all wrong in supposing that we, the socialists, will use brutal force against the anarchists! Life itself and the judgement of the masses will resolve the problem and will put us in agreement. No! Can you really admit for a single instant such an absurdity: socialists in power shooting anarchists? Come, come, what do you take us for? Anyhow, we are socialists, comrade Voline! We are not your enemies."

In December 1919, seriously ill, I was arrested by the Bolshevik military authorities in the Makhnovist region of the Ukraine. Considering me an important militant, the authorities advised Trotsky of my arrest by a special telegram and asked for his instructions concerning me. The reply, also by telegram, arrived quickly, clearly, laconically: "SHOOT HIM IMMEDIATELY—TROTSKY." I was not shot, thanks to a set of circumstances particularly fortunate and entirely fortuitous.

APPENDIX II

A Bibliographical Sketch

The Unknown Revolution was first published in France as *La Révolution Inconnue* in 1947, two years after Voline's death, and republished in 1969. It appeared in English in the 1950s, when an abridged version was published in two volumes in 1954 and 1955 by the Libertarian Book Club (New York City) and by Freedom Press (London). Translated by Holley Cantine, *Nineteen-Seventeen: The Russian Revolution* (1954) included Voline's preface and Book II (without subsections and some renamed and merged chapters), while *The Unknown Revolution: Kronstadt 1921, Ukraine 1918–21* (1955) included Book III. It was finally published in full in America by Red and Black/Solidarity in 1974, with the missing sections translated by Fredy Perlman. It was reprinted by Black Rose Books in 1975 (and again in 1990). This edition is a reprint of this last complete version.

APPENDIX III

Russian Revolutionary Parties

The various Socialist Parties active during the Russian Revolution can be split into two broad groupings: Marxist and populist.

The Marxists were grouped in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), modelled on the German Social Democratic Party, whose main theoretician was Karl Kautsky. The immediate aim of the RSDLP was to create a bourgeois republic in order to build capitalism in Russia, arguing like other Marxists that socialism could only be based upon a developed capitalist economy. At its Second Conference, in 1903, the party split into two factions, ostensibly over minor issues of party organisation.[1] Those who were in the minority in a crucial vote on the question of party membership

1 These were the two main factions in Russian Marxism, but they were many others (including "Economism," "Liquidators," "Recallism," "God-builders," "Ultimatism," and "Machism") as discussed in Grigorii Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party: A Popular Outline* (London: New Park Publications, 1973). This work is notable for an appendix containing a statement issued in March 1923 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party ("To the Workers of the USSR") that summarised the lessons gained from the Russian Revolution, namely, that "the party of the Bolsheviks proved able to stand out fearlessly against the vacillations within its own class, vacillations which, with the slightest weakness in the vanguard, could turn into an unprecedented defeat for the proletariat." Vacillations are expressed by workers' democracy, so this was rejected: "The dictatorship of the working class finds its expression in the dictatorship of the party" (213, 214).

came to be called Mensheviks (from the Russian word for minority), while the other faction become known as the Bolsheviks (from the Russian word for majority). The factions became independent parties in 1912, when a Bolsheviks-only party conference in Prague formally expelled the Mensheviks and created the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (bolsheviks) or RSDLP(b), unofficially referred to as the Bolshevik Party. In 1918, the RSDLP(b) became the Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) due to the fact most Social Democratic Parties had supported their ruling class during the First World War, not least the German party.

The leading member of the Bolsheviks was Vladimir Lenin, who, in 1917, won his party over his to the idea of pushing the bourgeois revolution toward a social revolution (a position previously only advocated by anarchists during the near revolution of 1905). The leading member of the Mensheviks was Julius Martov, who persuaded his party to adopt a left-wing position in 1918 after its disastrous participation in the Provisional Government during 1917 (not least, supporting its pursuit of the war effort). With the victory of Martov's Menshevik-Internationalists, the party accepted the October Revolution and opposed attempts to violently overthrow the Bolshevik regime, while working as the legal opposition to Bolshevik authoritarianism.

The populists were grouped into the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) and had an agrarian socialist position. The party had a substantial peasant support and rejected the Marxist notion that Russia had to go through a capitalist stage before socialism was possible. Instead, the populists argued that the peasant commune (*Mir*) could be the basis of a socialist transformation. Like both wings of the RSDLP before 1917, their political aim was the creation of a republic based on a democratically elected constituent assembly that would be the means to achieve land reform and wider social transformation.

After the February Revolution of 1917, the SRs shared power with liberal parties and Mensheviks within the Russian Provisional Government. However, many members opposed this policy in

favour of a social revolution based on the soviets, opposition to the war, and immediate land reform. With the October Revolution, the party split, and those who supported the Bolshevik revolution formed the Left SRs, led by Maria Spiridonova. The anti-Bolshevik faction became known as the Right SRs.

The Left SRs worked with the Bolsheviks, entering into a coalition government with them as a minority partner in December 1917, before resigning their governmental positions in March 1918 in protest at the signing and ratification of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (although they objected to numerous other Bolshevik policies, not least those directed against the peasants). Finally, there was the smaller grouping of SR Maximalists who were politically between the Left SRs and the anarchists.

November 1917 saw the SRs gain 380 representatives in the constituent assembly against 168 Bolsheviks, leading the Bolsheviks to disband the assembly after its first sitting in January 1918.[2] This went against the Bolshevik's long-standing support for the constituent assembly and their own demands during 1917 that one be called. Lenin justified this action by pointing to the soviets as being a more democratic form of state and that the election to the constituent assembly took place on "the basis of the election lists of the parties existing prior to the proletarian-peasant revolution under the rule of the bourgeoisie" (i.e., before the SR split, meaning voters could not express support for the Left SRs).[3] Considering this a betrayal of both the long-standing aims of the revolution and democratic

---

2 A partial but indicative count of votes covering fifty-four of seventy-nine constituencies published in 1918 reported that the SRs received 58 per cent of the vote (16.5 million) and the Bolsheviks 25 per cent (9.2 million). Lenin summarised that the "petty-bourgeois democratic" parties (SRs, Mensheviks, etc.) received 62 per cent, the landlord and capitalist parties, 13 per cent (4.6 million), and the "Party of the Proletariat," 25 per cent; "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in *Collected Works*, vol. 30 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 253–55.

3 V.I. Lenin, "Theses on the Constituent Assembly," in *Collected Works*, vol. 26 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 379–83.

norms, the Right SRs took advantage of the revolt of the Czech Legion in late May 1918 to form the democratic counter-revolution based around the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (Komuch) in Samara. Aligning themselves with Tsarist generals, they were quickly marginalised and replaced by the Whites, who aimed at a restoration of the former autocratic regime. By early 1919, the civil war was primarily between the Bolshevik state and the Whites, with most SRs and Mensheviks supporting the former as the lesser evil.

APPENDIX IV

The Structure of the Soviet State

The soviets (Russian for councils) were created in 1905 as delegates elected from workplaces to co-ordinate strikes, subject to specific mandates and recall.[1] These were reformed in 1917 and included delegates from military units, with appointees from political parties being included on their executive committees. The first national soviet congress took place in June 1917, with delegates elected from local soviets then electing a Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), which made decisions between congresses.

The Bolsheviks organised an insurrection to coincide with the second national congress in November 1918 (October, in the Old Style calendar), which was ratified by a small majority of attendees (basically, the Bolsheviks and Left SRs delegates). As well as re-electing a new VTsIK, the congress also elected a sixteen-member Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), with Lenin as its chairman. This was an executive body above the soviet congress's executive, which functioned as a government. Avoiding bourgeois

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1 Anarchists had been arguing for elections, mandates, and recall since Proudhon at the start of the 1848 revolution; *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Iain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), 273, 279, 379, a position Bakunin echoed in 1868 with his call for "the federated Alliance of all labour associations" to "constitute the Commune"; Daniel Guérin, *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 181.

terms like cabinet, minister, and ministry, the new regime had instead council, commissars, and a people's commissariat.

The All-Russian Congress met quarterly until the Sixth All-Russian Congress in November 1918, then it was called only in December 1919, 1920, and 1921 (when it was formally agreed that it would meet annually in the future). The Congress was formed of representatives of urban soviets (one deputy per 25 thousand voters) and provincial soviets (one deputy for every 125 thousand inhabitants), thereby building in a one to five weighting of the proletariat against the peasantry (only members of these two classes had a vote, all other social classes being denied a ballot). The VTsIK was originally intended to remain in permanent session, but its meetings gradually declined in frequency until, in 1921, it was limited to meeting three times a year. The VTsIK also had a presidium, in theory a small committee elected to manage its procedural matters. Local soviets were expected to execute the decisions of the Sovnarkom.[2]

While in theory the VTsIK was the supreme organ of power between the sovereign national congresses, it was quickly relegated to a mere rubber stamp for Sovnarkom decrees. It must be stressed that in Bolshevik circles this was considered perfectly fine and not an unfortunate side effect of the civil war (indeed, it existed from the first day of the October Revolution). As Lenin recounted in 1920:

> The mere presentation of the question—"dictatorship of the party *or* dictatorship of the class; dictatorship (party) of the leaders, *or* dictatorship (party) of the masses?"—testifies to most incredibly and hopelessly muddled thinking. . . . To go so far, in this connection, as to contrast, *in general*, the dictatorship of the masses with a dictatorship of the leaders is ridiculously absurd, and stupid. . . . In Russia today . . . the

2 Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917–1923,* vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1966), 220–21.

> dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat organised in the Soviets; the proletariat is guided by the Communist Party of Bolsheviks. . . . The Party, which holds annual congresses . . . is directed by a Central Committee of nineteen elected at the Congress, while the current work in Moscow has to be carried on by still smaller bodies, known as the Organising Bureau and the Political Bureau, which are elected at plenary meetings of the Central Committee, five members of the Central Committee to each bureau. This, it would appear, is a full-fledged "oligarchy." No important political or organisational question is decided by any state institution in our republic without the guidance of the Party's Central Committee. . . . Such is the general mechanism of the proletarian state power viewed "from above," from the standpoint of the practical implementation of the dictatorship. We hope that the reader will understand why the Russian Bolshevik who has known this mechanism for twenty-five years and has seen it develop out of small, illegal and underground circles, cannot help regarding all this talk about "from above" *or* "from below," about the dictatorship of leaders *or* the dictatorship of the masses, etc., as ridiculous and childish nonsense.[3]

Lenin, unlike anarchists, did not bother to view this state power "from below," from the perspective of the working class in whose name it claimed to rule. As Voline's work shows, there are fundamental differences—at least for the masses—in a regime organised from the bottom up and that subject to rule from above by a few—even if those few talk of ultrademocratic soviets alongside a party dictatorship.

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3 V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder," *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: Princeton University, 1975), 568–73.

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Iain McKay is an independent anarchist writer and researcher. He was the main author of *An Anarchist FAQ* as well as numerous other works, including *Mutual Aid: An Introduction and Evaluation*. In addition, he has edited and introduced *Property Is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*; *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*; and Kropotkin's 1913 book *Modern Science and Anarchy*.

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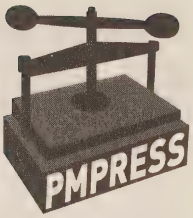

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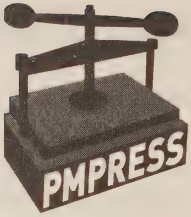

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JURA BOOKS

Jura Books has contributed to the publication of this important book—Voline's *The Unknown Revolution*—as part of our 40th anniversary. For all that time we have been a voluntary, non-profit anarchist project that's collectively run. The Jura Books shop has run continuously since it first opened in Newtown in 1977, and in our current location for more than 20 years. This is an incredible achievement if we do say so ourselves—especially for a radical, anti-capitalist project which is 100% powered by volunteers and donations.

For four decades, Jura has been spreading anarchist ideas in Sydney and more broadly. We've sold tens of thousands of books, pamphlets and posters. We've hosted thousands of events—from political talks and reading groups to films, gigs and poetry nights. We've lent support to uncountable campaigns and activist groups as best we could. And in our functioning and structures (notably decision-making), we've demonstrated a real-world example of self-managed, organised anarchism.

For all this time, Jura has only been possible and worthwhile because thousands of community supporters have volunteered their time, donated their cash, read our newsletters, and worked together with us to build radical alternatives.

Jura Books
440 Parramatta Rd, Petersham, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

www.jura.org.au

Collectives in the Spanish Revolution

Gaston Leval
With a foreword by Vernon Richards, and an introduction by Pedro García-Guirao

ISBN: 978-1-62963-447-0
$27.95 416 pages

Revolutionary Spain came about with an explosion of social change so advanced and sweeping that it remains widely studied as one of the foremost experiments in worker self-management in history. At the heart of this vast foray into toppling entrenched forms of domination and centralised control was the flourishing of an array of worker-run collectives in industry, agriculture, public services, and beyond.

Collectives in the Spanish Revolution is a unique account of this transformative process—a work combining impeccable research and analysis with lucid reportage. Its author, Gaston Leval, was not only a participant in the Revolution and a dedicated anarcho-syndicalist but an especially knowledgeable eyewitness to the many industrial and agrarian collectives. In documenting the collectives' organisation and how they improved working conditions and increased output, Leval also gave voice to the workers who made them, recording their stories and experiences. At the same time, Leval did not shy away from exploring some of the collectives' failings, often ignored in other accounts of the period, opening space for readers today to critically draw lessons from the Spanish experience with self-managed collectives.

This classic translation of the French original by Vernon Richards is presented in this edition for the first time with an index. A new introduction by Pedro García-Guirao and a preface by Stuart Christie offer a précis of Leval's life and methods, placing his landmark study in the context of more recent writing on the Spanish collectives—eloquently positing that Leval's account of collectivism and his assessments of their achievements and failings still have a great deal to teach us today.

"Collectives in the Spanish Revolution *demonstrates clearly that the working class are perfectly capable of running farms, factories, workshops, and public services without bosses or managers dictating to them.*"
—Stuart Christie, author of *The Floodgates of Anarchy*

The CNT in the Spanish Revolution Vols. 1–3

José Peirats
with an introduction by Chris Ealham

Vol. 1 **ISBN: 978-1-60486-207-2**
$28.00 432 pages

Vol. 2 **ISBN: 978-1-60486-208-9**
$22.95 312 pages

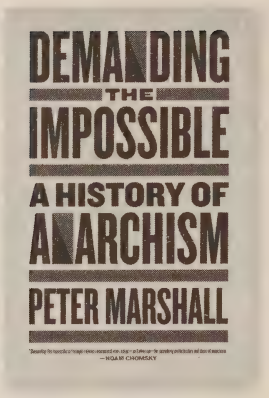
Vol. 3 **ISBN: 978-1-60486-209-6**
$22.95 296 pages

The CNT in the Spanish Revolution is the history of one of the most original and audacious, and arguably also the most far-reaching, of all the twentieth-century revolutions. It is the history of the giddy years of political change and hope in 1930s Spain, when the so-called 'Generation of '36', Peirats' own generation, rose up against the oppressive structures of Spanish society. It is also a history of a revolution that failed, crushed in the jaws of its enemies on both the reformist left and the reactionary right. José Peirats' account is effectively the official CNT history of the war, passionate, partisan but, above all, intelligent. Its huge sweeping canvas covers all areas of the anarchist experience—the spontaneous militias, the revolutionary collectives, the moral dilemmas occasioned by the clash of revolutionary ideals and the stark reality of the war effort against Franco and his German Nazi and Italian Fascist allies.

This new edition is carefully indexed in a way that converts the work into a usable tool for historians and makes it much easier for the general reader to dip in with greater purpose and pleasure.

"'José Peirats' The CNT in the Spanish Revolution *is a landmark in the historiography of the Spanish Civil War. . . . Originally published in Toulouse in the early 1950s, it was a rarity anxiously searched for by historians and others who gleefully pillaged its wealth of documentation. Even its republication in Paris in 1971 by the exiled Spanish publishing house, Ruedo Ibérico, though welcome, still left the book in the territory of specialists. For that reason alone, the present project to publish the entire work in English is to be applauded."*
—Professor Paul Preston, London School of Economics

Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism



Peter Marshall

ISBN: 978-1-60486-064-1
$28.95 840 pages

Navigating the broad "river of anarchy," from Taoism to Situationism, from Ranters to Punk rockers, from individualists to communists, from anarcho-syndicalists to anarcha-feminists, *Demanding the Impossible* is an authoritative and lively study of a widely misunderstood subject. It explores the key anarchist concepts of society and the state, freedom and equality, authority and power, and investigates the successes and failure of the anarchist movements throughout the world. While remaining sympathetic to anarchism, it presents a balanced and critical account. It covers not only the classic anarchist thinkers, such as Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus and Emma Goldman, but also other libertarian figures, such as Nietzsche, Camus, Gandhi, Foucault and Chomsky. No other book on anarchism covers so much so incisively.

In this updated edition, a new epilogue examines the most recent developments, including "post-anarchism" and "anarcho-primitivism" as well as the anarchist contribution to the peace, green and Global Justice movements.

Demanding the Impossible is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand what anarchists stand for and what they have achieved. It will also appeal to those who want to discover how anarchism offers an inspiring and original body of ideas and practices which is more relevant than ever in the twenty-first century.

"Demanding the Impossible *is the book I always recommend when asked—as I often am—for something on the history and ideas of anarchism.*"
—Noam Chomsky

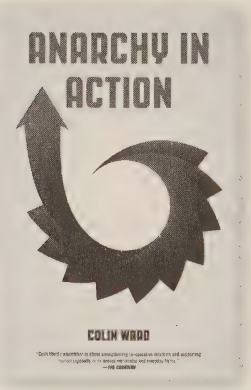
"Attractively written and fully referenced . . . bound to be the standard history."
—Colin Ward, *Times Educational Supplement*

"Large, labyrinthine, tentative: for me these are all adjectives of praise when applied to works of history, and Demanding the Impossible *meets all of them."*
—George Woodcock, *Independent*

Anarchy in Action

Colin Ward

ISBN: 978-1-62963-238-4
$15.95 192 pages



The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism.

Anarchist ideas are so much at variance with ordinary political assumptions and the solutions anarchists offer so remote, that all too often people find it hard to take anarchism seriously. This classic text is an attempt to bridge the gap between the present reality and anarchist aspirations, "between what is and what, according to the anarchists, might be."

Through a wide-ranging analysis—drawing on examples from education, urban planning, welfare, housing, the environment, the workplace, and the family, to name but a few—Colin Ward demonstrates that the roots of anarchist practice are not so alien or quixotic as they might at first seem but lie precisely in the ways that people have always tended to organize themselves when left alone to do so. The result is both an accessible introduction for those new to anarchism and pause for thought for those who are too quick to dismiss it.

For more than thirty years, in over thirty books, Colin Ward patiently explained anarchist solutions to everything from vandalism to climate change—and celebrated unofficial uses of the landscape as commons, from holiday camps to squatter communities. Ward was an anarchist journalist and editor for almost sixty years, most famously editing the journal *Anarchy*. He was also a columnist for *New Statesman*, *New Society*, *Freedom*, and *Town and Country Planning*.

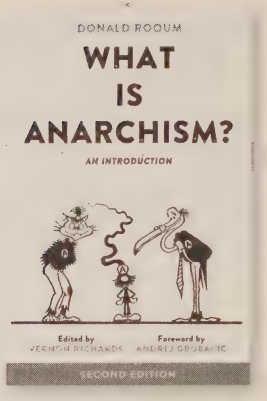
"It is difficult to match the empirical strength, the lucidity of prose, and the integration of theory and practical insight in the magnificent body of work produced by the veteran anarchist Colin Ward."
—Prospect

What Is Anarchism?: An Introduction

Second Edition

Donald Rooum,
edited by Vernon Richards
with a foreword by Andrej Grubačić

ISBN: 978-1-62963-146-2
$14.95 160 pages



Anarchists believe that the point of society is to widen the choices of individuals. Anarchism is opposed to states, armies, slavery, the wages system, the landlord system, prisons, capitalism, bureaucracy, meritocracy, theocracy, revolutionary governments, patriarchy, matriarchy, monarchy, oligarchy, and every other kind of coercive institution. In other words, anarchism opposes government in all its forms.

Enlarged and updated for a modern audience, *What Is Anarchism?* has the making of a standard reference book. As an introduction to the development of anarchist thought, it will be useful not only to propagandists and proselytizers of anarchism but also to teachers and students of political theory, philosophy, sociology, history, and to all who want to uncover the basic core of anarchism.

This useful compendium, compiled and edited by the late Vernon Richards of Freedom Press, with additional selections by Donald Rooum, includes extracts from the work of Errico Malatesta, Peter Kropotkin, Max Stirner, Emma Goldman, Charlotte Wilson, Michael Bakunin, Rudolf Rocker, Alexander Berkman, Colin Ward, Albert Meltzer, and many others.

Author and Wildcat cartoonist Donald Rooum gives context to the selections with introductions looking at "What Anarchists Believe," "How Anarchists Differ," and "What Anarchists Do" and provides helpful and humorous illustrations throughout the book.

"What Is Anarchism? *is a classic. It brings together a marvellous selection of inspiring texts with a clear, comprehensive introduction—now updated—to provide a brilliant account of the cares, concerns and commitments that animate anarchist politics and activities of British anarchists since 1945."*
—Ruth Kinna, author of *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide*

Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward

David Goodway

ISBN: 978-1-60486-221-8
$24.95 448 pages

From William Morris to Oscar Wilde to George Orwell, left-libertarian thought has long been an important but neglected part of British cultural and political history. In *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow*, David Goodway seeks to recover and revitalize that indigenous anarchist tradition. This book succeeds as simultaneously a cultural history of left-libertarian thought in Britain and a demonstration of the applicability of that history to current politics. Goodway argues that a recovered anarchist tradition could—and should—be a touchstone for contemporary political radicals. Moving seamlessly from Aldous Huxley and Colin Ward to the war in Iraq, this challenging volume will energize leftist movements throughout the world.

"Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow *is an impressive achievement for its rigorous scholarship across a wide range of sources, for collating this diverse material in a cogent and systematic narrative-cum-argument, and for elucidating it with clarity and flair . . . It is a book that needed to be written and now deserves to be read.*"
—*Journal of William Morris Studies*

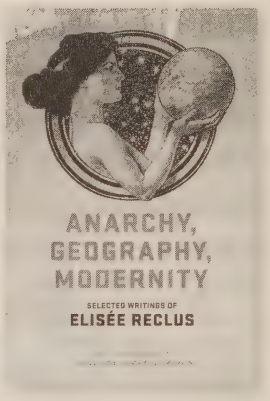
"Goodway outlines with admirable clarity the many variations in anarchist thought. By extending outwards to left-libertarians he takes on even greater diversity."
—Sheila Rowbotham, *Red Pepper*

"A splendid survey of 'left-libertarian thought' in this country, it has given me hours of delight and interest. Though it is very learned, it isn't dry. Goodway's friends in the awkward squad (especially William Blake) are both stimulating and comforting companions in today's political climate."
—A.N. Wilson, *Daily Telegraph*

Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: Selected Writings of Elisée Reclus

Edited by John P. Clark and Camille Martin

ISBN: 978-1-60486-429-8
$22.95 304 pages



Anarchy, Geography, Modernity is the first comprehensive introduction to the thought of Elisée Reclus, the great anarchist geographer and political theorist. It shows him to be an extraordinary figure for his age. Not only an anarchist but also a radical feminist, anti-racist, ecologist, animal rights advocate, cultural radical, nudist, and vegetarian. Not only a major social thinker but also a dedicated revolutionary.

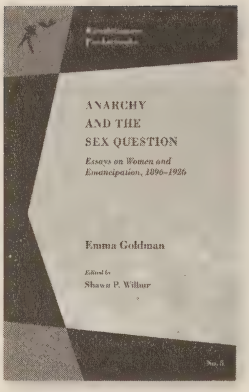
The work analyzes Reclus' greatest achievement, a sweeping historical and theoretical synthesis recounting the story of the earth and humanity as an epochal struggle between freedom and domination. It presents his groundbreaking critique of all forms of domination: not only capitalism, the state, and authoritarian religion, but also patriarchy, racism, technological domination, and the domination of nature. His crucial insights on the interrelation between personal and small-group transformation, broader cultural change, and large-scale social organization are explored. Reclus' ideas are presented both through detailed exposition and analysis, and in extensive translations of key texts, most appearing in English for the first time.

"For far too long Elisée Reclus has stood in the shadow of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Emma Goldman. Now John Clark has pulled Reclus forward to stand shoulder to shoulder with Anarchism's cynosures. Reclus' light brought into anarchism's compass not only a focus on ecology, but a struggle against both patriarchy and racism, contributions which can now be fully appreciated thanks to John Clark's exegesis and [his and Camille Martin's] translations of works previously unavailable in English. No serious reader can afford to neglect this book."
—Dana Ward, Pitzer College

Anarchy and the Sex Question: Essays on Women and Emancipation, 1896–1926

Emma Goldman
Edited by Shawn P. Wilbur

ISBN: 978-1-62963-144-8
$14.95 160 pages



For Emma Goldman, the "High Priestess of Anarchy," anarchism was "a living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions," but "the most elemental force in human life" was something still more basic and vital: sex.

"The Sex Question" emerged for Goldman in multiple contexts, and we find her addressing it in writing on subjects as varied as women's suffrage, "free love," birth control, the "New Woman," homosexuality, marriage, love, and literature. It was at once a political question, an economic question, a question of morality, and a question of social relations.

But her analysis of that most elemental force remained fragmentary, scattered across numerous published (and unpublished) works and conditioned by numerous contexts. *Anarchy and the Sex Question* draws together the most important of those scattered sources, uniting both familiar essays and archival material, in an attempt to recreate the great work on sex that Emma Goldman might have given us. In the process, it sheds light on Goldman's place in the history of feminism.

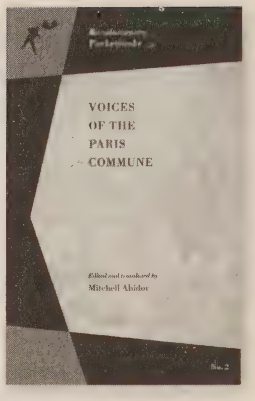
"Emma Goldman left a profound legacy of wisdom, insight, and passionate commitment to life. Shawn Wilbur has carefully selected her best writings on that most profound, pleasurable, and challenging of topics: sex. This collection is a great service to anarchist, feminist, and queer communities around the world."
—Jamie Heckert, coeditor of *Anarchism & Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power*

"Shawn Wilbur has done a great job assembling and introducing Emma Goldman's writings on women, feminism, and sexuality. As he notes, Goldman's essays continue to provoke and inspire. The collection artfully documents the evolution of Goldman's views on freedom, sex, and human liberation."
—Robert Graham, editor of *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*

Voices of the Paris Commune

Edited by Mitchell Abidor

ISBN: 978-1-62963-100-4
$14.95 128 pages



The Paris Commune of 1871, the first instance of a working-class seizure of power, has been subject to countless interpretations; reviled by its enemies as a murderous bacchanalia of the unwashed while praised by supporters as an exemplar of proletarian anarchism in action. As both a successful model to be imitated and as a devastating failure to be avoided. All of the interpretations are tendentious. Historians view the working class's three-month rule through their own prism, distant in time and space. *Voices of the Paris Commune* takes a different tack. In this book only those who were present in the spring of 1871, who lived through and participated in the Commune, are heard.

The Paris Commune had a vibrant press, and it is represented here by its most important newspaper, *Le Cri du Peuple*, edited by Jules Vallès, member of the First International. Like any legitimate government, the Paris Commune held parliamentary sessions and issued daily printed reports of the heated, contentious deliberations that belie any accusation of dictatorship. Included in this collection is the transcript of the debate in the Commune, just days before its final defeat, on the establishing of a Committee of Public Safety and on the fate of the hostages held by the Commune, hostages who would ultimately be killed.

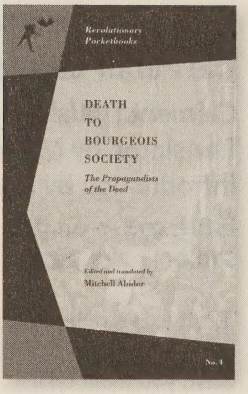
Finally, *Voices of the Paris Commune* contains a selection from the inquiry carried out twenty years after the event by the intellectual review *La Revue Blanche*, asking participants to judge the successes and failures of the Paris Commune. This section provides a fascinating range of opinions of this epochal event.

"The Paris Commune of 1871 has been the subject of much ideological debate, often far removed from the experiences of the participants themselves. If you really want to dig deep into what happened during those fateful weeks, reading these eyewitness accounts is mandatory."
—Gabriel Kuhn, editor of *All Power to the Councils! A Documentary History of the German Revolution of 1918–1919*

Death to Bourgeois Society: The Propagandists of the Deed

Edited and translated by Mitchell Abidor

ISBN: 978-1-62963-112-7
$14.95 128 pages



Perhaps no period has so marked, so deformed, or so defined the anarchist movement as the three years in France from 1892 to 1894, the years known as the Age of Attentats, the years dominated by the Propagandists of the Deed.

Death to Bourgeois Society tells the story of four young anarchists who were guillotined in France in the 1890s. Their courage was motivated by noble ideals whose realization they saw their bombs and assassinations as hastening. In a time of cynicism and political decay for many, they represented a purity lacking in society, and their actions when they were captured, their forthrightness, their defiance up to the guillotine only added to their luster.

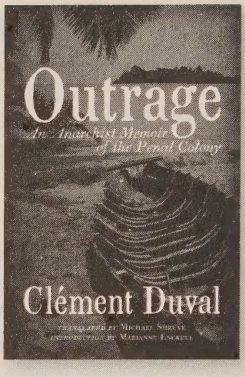
The texts collected in *Death to Bourgeois Society* focus on the main avatars of this movement: the grave robber/murderer/terrorist Ravachol; Auguste Vaillant, who bombed the Chamber of Deputies; Emile Henry, who attacked both the bourgeois in their class function and their very existence; and the Italian immigrant Santo Caserio, who brought down the curtain on the age when he assassinated the French president Sadi Carnot.

The volume contains key first person narratives of the events, from Ravachol's forbidden speech and his account of his life, to Henry's questioning at his trial and his programmatic letter to the director of the prison in which he was held, to Vaillant's confrontation with the investigators immediately after tossing his bomb, and Caserio's description of the assassination and his defense at his trial.

"It is quite wrong and anachronistic to call the practitioners of 'propaganda by the deed' at the end of the nineteenth century 'lifestyle anarchists.' They were part and product of a social movement which was consciously anarchist and socialist."
—Peter Marshall, author of *Demanding the Impossible*

"Excellently edited collection of inspired and thoughtful reflections."
—Andrej Grubačić, coauthor of *Wobblies & Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History*

Outrage: An Anarchist Memoir of the Penal Colony



Clément Duval
Translated by Michael Shreve with an Introduction by Marianne Enckell

ISBN: 978-1-60486-500-4
$20.00 224 pages

"Theft exists only through the exploitation of man by man . . . when Society refuses you the right to exist, you must take it . . . the policeman arrested me in the name of the Law, I struck him in the name of Liberty."

In 1887, Clément Duval joined the tens of thousands of convicts sent to the "dry guillotine" of the French penal colonies. Few survived and fewer were able to tell the stories of their life in that hell. Duval spent fourteen years doing hard labor—espousing the values of anarchism and demonstrating the ideals by being a living example the entire time—before making his daring escape and arriving in New York City, welcomed by the Italian and French anarchists there.

This is much more than an historical document about the anarchist movement and the penal colony. It is a remarkable story of survival by one man's self-determination, energy, courage, loyalty, and hope. It was thanks to being true and faithful to his ideals that Duval survived life in this hell. Unlike the well-known prisoner Papillon, who arrived and dramatically escaped soon after Duval, he encouraged his fellow prisoners to practice mutual aid, through their deeds and not just their words. It is a call to action for mindful, conscious people to fight for their rights to the very end, to never give up or give in.

More than just a story of a life or a testament of ideals, here is a monument to the human spirit and a war cry for freedom and justice.

HISTORY-RUSSIA / POLITICS-ANARCHISM

"In rich detail Voline documents the efforts of workers, peasants, and intellectuals to inaugurate a free society based on local initiative and autonomy. . . . It should be read by every person interested in the anarchist movement and the Russian Revolution."

—PAUL AVRICH, AUTHOR OF *THE RUSSIAN ANARCHISTS*

This is the untold story of the Russian Revolution: its antecedents, its far-reaching changes, its betrayal by Bolshevik terror, and the massive resistance of non-Bolshevik revolutionaries. This in-depth, eyewitness history written by Voline, an outspoken activist in the Russian Revolution, is accompanied by a biography of the author by Rudolf Rocker and a contemporary introduction and several new appendixes by anarchist historian Iain McKay

Significant attention is given to what the author describes as "struggles for the real Social Revolution"; that is, the uprising of the sailors and workers of Kronstadt in 1921, and the peasant movement that Nestor Makhno led in Ukraine. These movements, which sought to defend the Social Revolution from destruction by the politicians, provide important material for a clearer understanding of both the original objectives of the Russian Revolution and the problems with which all revolutions with far-reaching social objectives have to contend.

Drawing on the revolutionary press of the time, Voline reveals the deep cleavage between the objectives of the libertarians and those of the Bolsheviks, differences which the latter "resolved" by ruthlessly eliminating all who stood in their way in the struggle for power.

This edition is a translation of the full text of *La Révolution inconnue*, originally published in French in 1947. It reinstates material omitted from earlier English-language editions and reproduces the complete text of the original volumes.

"A fascinating and valuable book—a combination of history, eyewitness account, and partisan advocacy—about the Russian revolution of 1917–21."

—STEPHEN F. COHEN, AUTHOR OF *BUKHARIN AND THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION*

VOLINE (Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum, 1882–1945), writer, educator, poet, and anarchist, was an outspoken activist in the Russian Revolution. Exiled by the Tsarist tribunal, then sentenced to death by Trotsky and rescued amid protests, he never ceased to live up to his chosen nom de guerre based on the Russian word for freedom.

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USA $32.95

ISBN 978-1-62963-577-4

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